

**JOURNAL  
OF  
INDIAN HISTORY  
AND  
CULTURE**

**September 2011  
Seventeenth Issue**

**C.P. RAMASWAMI AIYAR INSTITUTE OF INDOLOGICAL RESEARCH**  
(affiliated to the University of Madras)  
The C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation  
1 Eldams Road, Chennai 600 018. INDIA

**Editor : Dr.G.J. Sudhakar**

**Board of Editors**

Dr. K. V. Raman

Dr. Nanditha Krishna

**Referees**

Dr. A. Chandrasekharan

Dr. V. Balambal

Dr. S. Vasanthi

Dr. Chitra Madhavan

**Published by**

**Dr. Nanditha Krishna**

C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Institute of Indological Research

The C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation

1 Eldams Road Chennai 600 018

Tel : 2434 1778 / 2435 9366

Fax : 91-44-24351022

E-mail: cpraf@vsnl.com, cprafoundation@gmail.com

Website: [www.cprfoundation.org](http://www.cprfoundation.org)

**ISSN : 0975 - 7805**

**Layout Design : R. Sathyanarayanan & P. Dhanalakshmi**

**Sub editing by : Mr. Narayan Onkar**

**Subscription**

Rs. 150/- (for 2 issues)

Rs. 290/- (for 4 issues)

## CONTENTS

<b>Lion and Half Man-Half Animal deities in the Indus Valley Civilization</b> <i>by G. Balaji</i>	7
<b>Ayodhya's Three History Debates</b> <i>by Dr. Koenraad Elst</i>	13
<b>Glimpses of Sri Kallarpiran Temple, Srivaikuntam</b> <i>by Dr. S. Murugavel</i>	56
<b>Tantric Cult of Tiruvattaru: A Study</b> <i>by R. Ezhilraman</i>	76
<b>Jainism under Vijaynagar</b> <i>by Dr. T. Surya Prakash and Dr. Y. Ramachandra Reddy</i>	99
<b>A Brief Note on Tandas of Ramakuppam in Chittoor District of Andhra Pradesh</b> <i>by Dr. D. Mercy Ratna Rani</i>	114
<b>Plantation Economy of British Malabar</b> <i>by Dr. Lakshmanan</i>	119
<b>Agraharam Houses in Kanchipuram</b> <i>by J. Sumathi</i>	127
<b>Buckingham Canal – A Case Study</b> <i>by A. Munuswamy</i>	134

<b>Christianity in the Princely State of Mysore (1831-1947)</b>	
<i>by Sr. Anne Mary</i>	150
<b>A Critical Analysis of the Arguments Advanced by the Opponents Against Home Rule</b>	
<i>by Dr. Yasodhamani</i>	162
<b>Women Upliftment</b>	
<b>by Raghupathi Venkatrathnam Naidu – A Study</b>	
<i>by Prof. T. Nagamma &amp; Dr. S. Reddeppa</i>	175
<b>Vanishing Tanks – A Few Examples from Madras City</b>	
<i>by Lalitha Ramadurai</i>	187
<b>History and Biography</b>	
<i>by Krishna Chaitanya Mopidevi and S. Srinivasa Rao</i>	199
<b>BOOK REVIEW</b>	
<b>1. A Comprehensive History of Medieval India from the Twelfth to the mid-Eighteenth Century</b>	
<i>by Salma Ahmed Farooqui – Dr. M.N. Rajesh</i>	207
<b>2. Ideology and Environment Situating the Origin of Vedic Culture</b>	
<i>by Ravindranath Nandi – Dr. S.N. Arya</i>	210

*printed on paper made from bagasse, an  
agricultural waste*

## **EDITOR'S NOTE**

The 17<sup>th</sup> Issue of the Journal is a thoroughly checked and refereed one. A lot of work has gone into it at various levels. We would like to place on record our sincere thanks to Prof. V. Balambal, Prof. A. Chandrasekaran, Dr. S. Vasanthi and Dr. Chitra Madhavan for finding time for our journal work.

Dr. Nanditha Krishna and her candidates have contributed well-researched papers to this issue. Congratulations!

Most of the papers in the issue are based on primary sources and are undoubtedly of good quality. They in fact contribute to knowledge in their area of study.

We thank Dr. S. Murugavel for revising his paper on “Glimpses of Sri Kallarpiran Temple, Sri Vaikuntan” and thus setting higher standards for himself and the journal.

We have four papers from Andhra Pradesh and one each from Karnataka and Kerala in addition to contributions from Tamil Nadu.

We thank Dr. S.N. Arya from Patna and Dr. M.N. Rajesh from Hyderabad for sending book reviews for this issue.

On the whole, the entire work has been satisfying and I would like to thank Dr. Nanditha Krishna, Mrs. Malathy Narasimhan, Mr. Narayan Onkar and other staff members of the Foundation for their support.

**Dr. G. J. Sudhakar**



# **LION AND HALF MAN – HALF ANIMAL DEITIES IN INDUS VALLEY CIVILIZATION**

**G. BALAJI**

*Research Officer,*

*C. P. R. Institute of Indological Research,*

*C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Chennai.*

A highly developed or matured civilization, known as the Indus or Harappan civilization, flourished on the banks of the rivers the Indus and Saraswati around 2500 B.C.E. The Indus civilization claims a larger area than any of the known pre-classical civilizations. Its northern border is Manda in Jammu. Its southernmost limit is Daimabad in Maharashtra. The eastern limit stretches up to Hulas in U.P. and the western limit up to Suktagendor in Baluchistan. From north to south it covered an area of 1600 kms and from east to west about 960 kms. The axis of Egypt and Mesopotamia was less than 960 kms.<sup>1</sup>

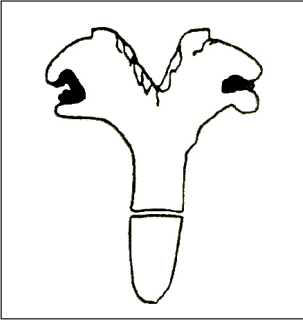
The remains of the Indus valley culture have yielded abundant animal representations. The animal art of the Indus valley was one of the vigorous expressions whose influence is discernible in the art of the historic period. Amongst the natural animals represented at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro are the lion, bull, elephant, bison, rhinoceros, buffalo, tiger, ram, hare, monkey, squirrel, cat, camel, snake, crocodile, pigeon, kite, fowl, pig, ibex, donkey, bear and even the grasshopper. The urge to represent such a variety of animals is indeed a remarkable phenomenon and goes beyond the needs of religion, which would require only the representation of a few chosen animals held sacred. Apart from these mythical animal figures like unicorns, three or five

horned animal heads sharing a single body, animal with human face trunk of the elephant and body of the bull, etc. are also found.

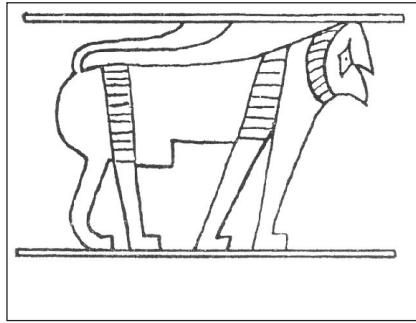
Animal figures are found in media like steatite, terracotta, bronze, copper and faience. Steatite seals with animal figures with Indus script are found in numerous numbers from the Harappan sites. The script has not been deciphered so far. So, the names of the animals are identified by the scholars visually and not according to the script. The seal of Pasupati is a famous concept in the art of animal worship. He is shown seated on a pedestal with horned head gear in yogic posture surrounded by animals like the tiger, elephant, rhinoceros, bear etc. Bharatha Iyer says, "The earliest of such representations occurs in the Neolithic age when figures of Mother Goddesses are found in association with animals. The Great Mother is the mother of all creation. Popularly known as the Lady of Beasts, she was worshipped in several countries of the ancient world: in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Africa, Asia Minor, Crete, Greece, Southern Spain, and Sicily. She possessed animal attributes; sometimes, she figures as a cow, lioness or ewe."<sup>2</sup>

A double headed lion bust made of terracotta dated between c. 2350 – 1500 B.C.E, found at Mohanjo-daro was known to be the earliest sculpture of the lion in India.<sup>3</sup> (Fig.1.) The pottery engraving of a lion dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.E., found in the Nal-Nundara in Baluchistan the border land where the Iranian plateau drops into the Indus plain, in a distinctive style which succeeds in conveying something of the regal dignity of this animal.<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 2) A terracotta figure with lion head and fish like body was found at Mohenjo-daro dated to c. 2700 B.C.E., now kept at the National Museum in New Delhi. It was identified





**Fig. 1.** *Terracotta double headed lion bust found at Mohanjo-daro. c. 2350 – 1500 B.C.E.(Drawing from the Book: Animal in Indian Sculpture by K. Bharatha Iyer)*



**Fig. 2.** *Lion engraving on pottery, Nundara, 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.E. (after Stuart Piggot). (Drawing from the Book: Animal in Indian Sculpture by K. Bharatha Iyer)*



**Fig. 3.** *Mythical Lion (terracotta). Mohenjodaro, c. 2700 B.C.E. Now in National Musuem, New Delhi.*

as a mythical lion. It has bulging eyes, broad lips and lines to show the mane around its head. It shows the distinct features of a lion.<sup>5</sup> (Fig. 3) Apart from the lion, Indus seals and other objects reveal half-man and half animal figures. These figures may have some religious significance.

A unique square steatite seal depicts the figure of a god seated in yogic posture with heels touching and facing each other.



**Fig. 4.** *Pasupathi (Siva) or “lord of animals” seal, c. 2700 B.C.E. steatite, Mohanjo-daro.*

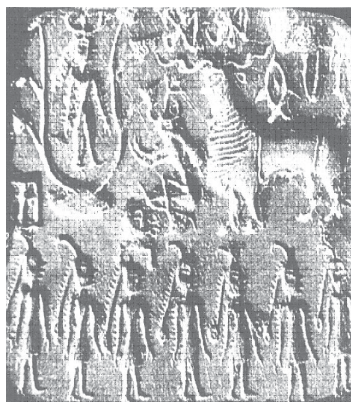


**Fig. 5.** *Horned female attacking a horned tiger. c. 2350 – 1500 B.C.E. Mohanjo-daro.*

He has three faces and is surrounded by animals and a man. The crowning head has two horns. His hands, fully covered with bangles, are stretched and resting on the knees. On top there is an inscription. (Fig. 4) Three seals of this type are reported from Mohenjo-daro. The god was identified as Pasupathi (Siva) or “lord of animals”. A Pasupati figure in the form of bull-head is also found painted on a big Jar from Padri, and also on pots excavated from Kot Diji, Burzhom and Kunal which are dated to the third millennium B.C.E. This evidence implies that Pasupati Siva in form or the other had been worshipped in India since the early Harappan period.<sup>6</sup> The above seal stands as an example of the continuation of worship of multi-headed gods in the Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions, which have emerged in India.

A seal represents a horned female fighting with a horned tiger. (Fig. 5) The interesting feature of this seal is that the

lower part of the human figure is shown as an animal with tail i.e. half human – half animal. There are some more examples that show that the horned or animal headed human figures were worshipped as deities. A seal from Mohanjodaro depicts a horned deity shown standing in between two branches of a tree. In front of the deity a kneeling figure is shown with folded hands. At the bottom, seven figures with caps having pig-tailing are standing in a row. (Fig. 6)



**Fig. 6.** Seal depicting horned deities, c. 2700 B.C.E. steatite, Mohanjo-daro.

The Indus Valley people gave importance to the animals in their day to day life and also they added their own creativity and instincts to regulate and influence to form. The deities they worshipped were also made by them with principal care and perfection. The mythical knowledge of this people is that the gods have faces on all four directions, supernatural powers, associated with nature; superhuman powers and they are the masters of beasts. All this is well executed on clay tablets.

The above evidences show that the Indus Valley people have given importance to the lion and also that they have worshipped deities which have the quality of wild beasts. The above seen images of *Pasupathi* and the half-man half-animal figure attacking a tiger shows the superhuman belief of these people. This proves that the indigenous idea of half-man half-animal gods has been prevalent in India since time unknown.

## References:

1. Pant, G.N., *Indus Valley Civilization*, National Museum Institute, New Delhi, 1995. p.3.
2. Bharatha Iyer, K., *Animals in Indian sculpture*, Taraporevala, Bombay, 1977. p.6.
3. Ghosh, A., ed., *An encyclopedia of Indian Archaeology*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1989. p.338.
4. Bharatha Iyer, K., *Animals in Indian sculpture*, Taraporevala, Bombay, 1977. p.65.
5. *A Guide to the National Museum*, Edt., Chauhan, R.R.S., National Museum, New Delhi, 1997. p.6.
6. Deo Prakash Sharma, *Harappan Seals, Sealings and Copper Tablets*, National Museum, New Delhi, 2000. p.23.

# AYODHYA'S THREE HISTORY DEBATES

**Dr. KOENRAAD ELST, Ph.D.**

*University of Leuven*

## **Introduction**

In this paper, we propose a survey of the controversy about the *Rama Janmabhumi* / *Bâbrî Masjid* in Ayodhya, where a mosque was allegedly built by Babar in 1528 over a demolished Hindu temple marking the birthplace of the deified proto-historic hero Rama. The mosque structure was demolished in turn by Hindu militants on 6 December 1992. In particular, we consider the three main questions concerning its history: (1) ancient, viz. Rama's historicity; (2) medieval-to-modern, viz. the site's history as a Hindu pilgrimage centre, the temple's alleged forcible replacement by a mosque, and the Hindu attempts to regain the site; and (3) contemporary, viz. the political and intellectual struggle over the site's future, before and after the demolition of the disputed mosque structure.

## **1. Court verdict**

The dispute over the Ayodhya temple/mosque has regained importance when the litigation over the contentious site started in 1950, reached a provisional conclusion at last with the Allahabad High Court (three-member Lucknow Bench) verdict of 30 September 2010. The majority acknowledged that a mosque had been built in forcible replacement at the site, and all three jointly decided to treat the disputed site as the birthplace of Rama.

The Court awarded two-thirds of the terrain including the exact spot of the Babri building to one of the Hindu claimants. The Friends of *Ram Lalla* (baby Rama), an ad hoc organ of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council), would get the portion where the central dome of the Babri Masjid used to be, and where at present the idols of Rama and Sita are kept in a makeshift temple. The place outside the former mosque where for centuries the Hindus had used an open-air altar, the *Ram Cabutra* ("platform", witnessed by Austrian Jesuit Joseph Tieffenthaler ca. 1770 [Chatterjee 1990/1:178-180]), is allotted to the *Nirmohi Akhara*, the local establishment of the Ramanandi sect. The remaining one-third was allotted to the Muslim claimant, the local Sunni Waqf Board, though the verdict denied its claim of ever having been in possession of the Babri Masjid. The more credible Muslim candidate as title-holder Javed Hussain, the mosque's *Mutawalli* (caretaker) until 1935, never filed a suit.

Almost immediately, the Hindu claimants as well as the Muslim claimant have appealed against this allotment. They and many observers pleaded that dividing the land would only reproduce the situation of 1855 and 1935, when Hindus and Muslims worshipped almost side by side and pitched battles were fought. Nobody of consequence heeded the plan proposed in some Muslim circles, viz. to build an Islamic-style peace monument rather than a mosque on their part of the land; just as earlier proposals by Muslim moderates to leave the site to the Hindus had always been disregarded. Each of the litigants is claiming all three parts, so the final verdict is still awaited from the Supreme Court. Meanwhile, we take stock of the historical elements underlying the dispute.

The entire judgment delivered by the three Honorable Judges separately runs into 8500 pages and is available on the website

of India's National Integration Council: [rjbm.nic.in](http://rjbm.nic.in). We excerpt from their concluding summaries the points relevant to the history debate.

Mr. Justice Dharam Veer Sharma opens by affirming: "The disputed site is the birth place of Lord Ram." Mr. Justice Sudhir Agarwal concurs: "The area covered under the central dome of the disputed structure is the birthplace of Lord Rama as per faith and belief of Hindus." The one Muslim on the Bench, Mr. Justice Sibghat Ullah Khan, isn't equally affirmative on this point, and merely accepts: "That after some time of construction of the mosque Hindus started identifying the premises in dispute as the exact birth place of Lord Ram". That is why: "[M]uch before 1855 Ram Chabutra and Seeta Rasoi ['Sita's kitchen'] had come into existence and Hindus were worshipping in the same."

As for the mosque's construction, Sharma opines: "The disputed building was constructed by Babar, the year is not certain, but it was built against the tenets of Islam. Thus, it cannot have the character of a mosque." Khan confirms: "The disputed structure was constructed as a mosque by or under orders of Babar." Agarwal is not so sure about who built it: "[I]t is difficult to hold as to when and by whom the disputed structure was constructed but this much is clear that the same was constructed before the visit of Joseph Tieffenthaler in Oudh area between 1766 to 1771."

What preceded the mosque? Sharma: "The disputed structure was constructed on the site of old structure after demolition of the same. The Archaeological Survey of India has proved that the structure was a massive Hindu religious structure." Agarwal: The building in dispute was constructed after demolition of Non-Islamic religious structure, i.e., a Hindu temple." Here Khan dissents: "No temple was demolished for constructing the

mosque.” He acknowledges that a temple had stood at the site, but that the mosque’s builder had had nothing to do with the temple’s demolition: “Mosque was constructed over the ruins of temples which were lying in utter ruins since a very long time before the construction of mosque and some material thereof was used in construction of the mosque.”

All the same, Khan concurs with his colleagues in the final settlement: “That in view of the above both the parties are declared to be joint title holders in possession of the entire premises in dispute and a preliminary decree to that effect is passed with the condition that (...) the portion beneath the Central dome where at present the makeshift temple stands will be allotted to the share of the Hindus.”

## 2. Who built the mosque?

We have no contemporaneous account of the Babri mosque’s construction. A group of historians from Jawaharlal Nehru University, who fired the opening salvo in the ongoing debate over Ayodhya’s history with their anti-temple statement *The Political Abuse of History*, tried to use this as an argument from silence against Babar’s involvement in the temple destruction in Ayodhya: “Nor is there any reference in Babar’s memoirs to the destruction of any temple in Ayodhya.” [JNU historians 1989, repr. Noorani 2003:I:31] It is even claimed that “[h]istorical evidence does not show that Babur came to Ayodhya” [Srivastava 1991:92]. However, the argument is invalid, for the part of the diary comprising his stay in Ayodhya has gone missing during Babar’s lifetime itself, as noted by its first English translator, Mrs. A.S. Beveridge: “In Babar’s diary, the pages for five months after 28 March 1528 when Babar noted his arrival in Turkish version causes a narrative gap (...) There is no reliable account for these months.” [Beveridge/Hiro 2006:309] “[I]n all known texts of the *Babur-Namah* there is a break of the narrative from 2 April 1528 (...) to 18 September 1528”. [Nath 1991:28]



All known sources of the subsequent centuries take for granted that the mosque was built on Babar's orders, which is also what the inscription over the gate said. The only half-exception is not exactly authoritative. In Tieffenthaler's travelogue, it is claimed that the mosque had been built over the "demolished fortress *Ramkot*" (Rama's castle) by either Babar or Aurangzeb. From this, Justice Agarwal mistakenly deduced that the Babri mosque could have been built about 160 years later by Babar's descendent Aurangzeb. The Aligarh Historians' Society [2010:1-9] laboriously but correctly refutes this opinion. Obviously, Tieffenthaler's eyewitness account is an important testimony about the Ayodhya of his day, but his local informers had no living memory of Babar; yet they still knew the stories by their grandparents about Aurangzeb's massive temple-destruction campaign ca. 1680, far more devastating than anything the newcomer Babar could organize. Under the more tolerant emperor Akbar, Babar's grandson and Aurangzeb's great-grandfather, many temples had been rebuilt, and Aurangzeb tried to undo this concession to Infidelism, e.g.: "The Swargadwar mosque and the Treta ka Thakur mosque [both in Ayodhya] were built by Aurangzeb after demolishing Hindu shrines of the same name dedicated to Rama." [Chatterjee 1990/2:184] Consequently, it was common to identify temple destructions with his name. Even in 1810, Francis Buchanan noticed that "the destruction [of the temple preceding the Babri Masjid] is very generally attributed by the Hindus to the furious zeal of Aurangzeb" but called this tradition "very ill-founded". [discussed in Elst 2002:162]

Attempts have been made to disprove Babar's role in the temple destruction deductively, viz. by arguing that by mental make-up or through circumstances, he *cannot* have contemplated the option of demolishing temples. Thus, the military situation of inter-Muslim strife could have forced him to seek good relations with the Hindus: "He was fighting against the Afghan Muslims

(...) and instead of antagonizing the Hindus by demolishing their sacred temples(...) he needed their goodwill and cooperation. The logic of the circumstances rules out [the] possibility of any iconoclastic activity on the part of Babur or his general Mir Baqi Beg.” [Nath 1991:31] However, Guru Nanak, one of the rare contemporaries to leave us a testimony, had a different impression: “The great Guru’s *Babar-vani* contains the strongest-ever condemnation of Babar’s vandalism. The text mentions, *inter alia*, that thanks to the vandal’s destruction mania, temples as strong as a thunderbolt were set on fire.” [Narain 1993:14]

Others cite “Babar’s will” in exoneration, in which the first Moghul exhorts his son to respect the Hindus and their customs, not to kill cows, etc. Rajendra Prasad, India’s first President, waxed sentimental about it, welcoming it as a forerunner of the Gandhian spirit of equal respect for all religions. [repr. Noorani 2003:I:1, with approval by Noorani 2003:I:xxii] This conflicts completely with Babar’s own diary in which he exults in being a *ghazi*, i.e. a killer of Infidels. There is, consequently, good reason to doubt the document’s authenticity: “A stranger part of the story is that this testament never came to anybody’s notice before its recent [ca. 1920] discovery. (...) The bulk of historians have declared the testament a downright forgery. Mrs. A.S. Beveridge (...) dismisses it as a forged document on fifteen counts including language and style, calligraphy and spelling, unroyal quality of the seals, mutually contradictory chronology (...) and what not.” [Narain 1993:66-67] Nevertheless, Babar’s general readiness to offend and kill Hindus doesn’t necessarily imply that he practiced temple destruction in this particular place in Ayodhya, as we shall see in §5.

Another alternative theory is that the mosque predates Babar. It was built in the Sharqi style developed ca. 1300, and therefore Sushil Srivastava and R. Nath, reckoned among the

anti- and the pro-temple camp, respectively, have suggested the building does belong to the Sultanate period: “architectural design does help us to conclude that the mosque belongs to a period before Babur” [Srivastava 1991:92]. And: “It is quite probable, and possible too, that a mosque was first raised during the Sultanate period (..) on the site of the most important temple associated with the life of Rama, and Mir Baqi just restored that mosque during his occupation of Ayodhya.” [Nath 1991:38, emphasis in the original]. However, Babar’s campaign was only the very start of the Moghul period, no distinctive Moghul style of architecture had yet been developed, so it is perfectly normal that the style from the just-concluded Sultanate period (1206-1625) was followed. This is no reason for denying Babar’s and Mir Baqi’s role in the mosque’s construction, on which otherwise all sources had always agreed. A date for the construction in the “early sixteenth century” is, moreover, confirmed by the excavations conducted by the Archaeological Survey of India. [ASI 2003: 279]

### **3. Court-ordered excavations reveal temple foundations**

When the debate over Ayodhya’s history erupted in 1989, the first stance of the anti-temple party was to blame the belief in the temple destruction by Babar on the British. Thus, “the myth is a 19<sup>th</sup>-century creation – by the British.” [Noorani 1990:66] Srivastava [1991:26] makes an even more implausible claim: “I am convinced that before the second half of the nineteenth century, the idea that the Moghul emperors had desecrated Hindu holy places was quite unknown. It was with the advent of the British in Ayodhya that this belief started spreading.” Prof. Harbans Mukhia confirms: “The link between the Rama temple and the Babri Masjid has a history of no more than 150 years behind it.” [*The Hindu*, 27 June 2003, repr. Noorani 2003:xviii] The British concoction thesis, with “the bias of British

officialdom” as one factor that “fed the belief that the Mosque was built after the destruction of a temple” [Mandal & Ratnagar 2007:6], has been upheld in some circles for at least 18 years.

Wiser elements in the anti-temple camp have shifted their position when the pro-temple camp presented evidence of pre-British confirmation by local Muslims and one Hindu and by European travelers [Chatterjee 1990, Narain 1993], starting with William Finch in 1608 who saw “the ruines of Ra[m]chand’s castle and houses, which the Indians acknowledge for the great God” [repr. Foster 1921:176, analysed in Narain 1993:39-40], and Hindi poet Sant Laladasa, who ca. 1670 described the birthplace of Rama as securing heaven for whomever pays a visit to it [presented by Narain 1993:13]. They now prefer to link the “emergent” belief in the location of Rama’s birth at the Babri Masjid site with the settling and increasing prominence of the Rama-worshipping Ramanandi monastic order in Ayodhya between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century. They never presented any documentary evidence for this, but the hypothesis is more reasonable than the British concoction scenario. (Less reasonable is the unexplained implication that the Ramanandis, while inventing out of the blue a site for Rama’s birth, should have picked the site of a prominent mosque at a time when Muslim power was firmly established.)

In order to leave the realm of multi-interpretable textual evidence and pure speculation, an appeal was made to the more tangible evidence of archaeology. In 2002, the High Court had asked for an investigation of the site, first with Ground-Penetrating Radar, and when this seemed to confirm the long-standing tradition of temple remains underneath the disputed site, with excavations by the ASI. The resulting findings were in the public domain since mid-2003 and have been intensely debated [vide Elst 2003]. We quote from the ASI Report [ASI 2003]’s summary:

“Excavation at the disputed site of Rama Janmabhumi - Babri Masjid was carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India from 12 March 2003 to 7 August 2003. During this period, as per the directions of the Hon’ble High Court, Lucknow, 82 trenches were excavated to verify the anomalies mentioned in the report of the Ground Penetrating Radar Survey which was conducted at the site prior to taking up the excavations.”

“The site has also proved to be significant for taking back its antiquarian remains for the first time to the middle of the thirteenth century B.C. (1250 ± 130 B.C.)(...)”

“Subsequently, during the early medieval period (eleventh - twelfth century A. D.) a huge structure, nearly 50 m in north-south orientation was constructed which seems to have been short lived, as only four of the fifty pillar bases exposed during the excavation belong to this level with a brick crush floor. On the remains of the above structure was constructed a massive structure with at least three structural phases and three successive floors attached with it. The architectural members of the earlier short lived massive structure with stencil cut foliage pattern and other decorative motifs were reused in the construction of the monumental structure having a huge pillared hall (or two halls) which is different from residential structures, providing sufficient evidence of a construction of public usage which remained under existence for a long time during the period VII (Medieval-Sultanate level - twelfth to sixteenth century A. D.) It was over the top of this construction during the early sixteenth century, that the disputed structure was constructed directly resting over it.”

“The Hon’ble High Court, in order to get sufficient archaeological evidence on the issue involved ‘whether there was any temple/structure which was demolished and mosque

was constructed on the disputed site' as stated on page 1 and further on p. 5 of their order dated 5 March 2003, had given directions to the Archaeological Survey of India to excavate at the disputed site where the GPR Survey has suggested evidence of anomalies which could be structure, pillars, foundation walls, slab flooring etc. which could be confirmed by excavation . Now, viewing in totality and taking into account the archaeological evidence of a massive structure just below the structure and evidence of continuity in structural phases from the tenth century onwards upto the construction of the disputed structure alongwith the yield of stone and decorated bricks as well as mutilated sculpture of the divine couple and carved architectural' members including foliage patterns, *amalaka* [a fruit motif], *kapotapali* [a "dovecot" frieze or cornice] doorjamb with semi-circular pilaster, broken octagonal shaft of black schist pillar, lotus motif, circular shrine having *pranala* (waterchute) in the north, fifty pillar bases in association of the huge structure, are indicative of remains which are distinctive features found associated with the temples of north India."

This ought to lay to rest all doubts about a pre-existing temple at the site of the mosque. But a number of unknowns remain. Both parties to the debate are so cock-sure about their theories, when, in fact, the transition between the Rajput-built temple ca. 1100 and the Babri mosque of 1528 remains to be reconstructed. In particular, the highs and lows in Islamic iconoclasm against Hindu temples in Ayodhya have not been mapped in detail and are in dispute.

#### **4. Islamic theology of iconoclasm**

The one book towering over the whole Ayodhya debate, the elephant in the room not mentioned in most papers on the controversy, is Sita Ram Goel's two-volume *Hindu Temples*,

*What Happened to Them?* [1990-91], now available in updated version, documenting the fact of Islamic iconoclasm [1998] and its theological motivation [1993] in great detail, citing purely from Muslim sources. It lists about two thousand Indian cases of mosques standing on the sites of demolished temples, verifiable instances as a standing challenge to those who deny this history. After twenty years, not a single item in the list has been shown to be incorrect. Goel also traces the practice to the precedent behaviour of Mohammed, the single most decisive source of authority in Islamic jurisprudence. The second mosque of Islam (we have no relevant data on the first), the main mosque of Medina, was built on a Pagan graveyard after digging up the bodies and chopping down a grove of date trees, a sacrilege according to Arab Pagan ethics. But the really important precedent is the *Kaaba*, where the Prophet and his nephew Ali destroyed all the 360 idols with their own hands, thus turning the Pagan temple into a mosque.[Ibn Ishaq tra. Guillaume 1987:552, Goel 2003:354-358]

Hundreds of Muslim rulers emulated their Prophet and destroyed idols and idol-houses in the lands they conquered, typically accompanying the act with an appropriate line from the Quran [17:81/83]: “The truth has come and falsehood has passed away. Verily, falsehood is bound to pass away”, which Mohammed himself uttered when breaking the idols of the *Kaaba*. This scenario played out nowhere more than in India, not only because of its demographic magnitude or because of Hinduism being more “idolatrous” than Christianity, but also because of the military stalemate: the Hindus were never entirely defeated, they reconquered their cities and rebuilt their temples, or their strength forced Muslim rulers (most notably Akbar) into compromise arrangements including toleration of idol-temples; which were then objects for renewed iconoclasm by later, more zealous Muslim rulers. This way, the Somnath temple in Gujarat was demolished no less than eight times.

Among Indian secularists, the done thing is to deny the long history of Islamic temple-destruction. Government policy is to sweep the topic under the carpet whenever it raises its head, as by fortuitous archaeological discoveries. Thus, at the Rudramahalaya complex in Siddhpur, Gujarat, ASI excavation work was stopped under Muslim pressure, when temple remains came to light. [Goradia 2003:97, 180] When a flood brought Hindu sculptures under and around the Bijamandal mosque in Vidisha (where four successive Hindu temples had been destroyed by Shamsuddin Iltutmish, Alauddin Khilji, Bahadur Shah of Gujarat and Aurangzeb) to the surface in 1991, the ASI was likewise prevented from excavating further. [Goradia 2003:183]

Since the Islamic destruction of idols and temples was so massive, it has to be faced at least sometimes but for such occasions a new explanation has recently been forwarded. The idea was taken mainly from American Islam scholar Richard Eaton, who has made the only-ever attempt to answer Goel, though without even trying to disprove a single item in his list nor discussing his presentation of the Islamic doctrine of iconoclasm. Eaton presents a list of “eighty” Islamic demolitions of Hindu temples [Eaton 2001], since then bandied about in numerous publications as “only eighty temples destroyed”. But in fact, he doesn’t claim the list is exhaustive, and moreover, one item in his list doesn’t equal one temple destroyed. Thus, item 6 is “Benares”, where demolition was effected by the “Ghurid army” (= Mohammed Ghori’s) in 1194. When we check the source he refers to, Hasan Nizami’s near-contemporaneous chronicle [tra. Elliot & Dowson 1952:II:223], we find it reports how in Benares, the Ghurid army “destroyed nearly one thousand temples, and raised mosques on their foundations”. So, even those “eighty” still amount to thousands of individual temples forcibly replaced by mosques.



It could not have been otherwise. Thus, the freshly-translated biography of 15th-century Shia Sufi preacher Shamsuddin Araki by one of his disciples sets apart a long chapter for detailing “Araki’s mission of destroying idols and temples of infidels”. [tra. Pandit 2009:209-278] In outlying and thinly-populated Gilgit and Baltistan, his individual tally of destroyed temples already surpassed eighty, the figure now claimed as grand total of Islamic temple destructions in all of India over more than a thousand years. He also explicited his justification for all this destruction, viz. Mohammed’s own destruction of the 360 idols in the Kaaba, the central precedent for all Islamic iconoclasm including the many thousands of certified instances in India alone. [Pandit 2009:257-58]

The second element of Eaton’s thesis [2000] now borrowed widely in secularist discourse is that Muslim temple-destroyers merely continued a tradition started by Hindu kings, who also “looted temples”. While Goel lists thousands of cases of Islamic temple destruction, Eaton could find only a few cases of Hindu temple looting. And while Goel lists numerous Muslim testimonies justifying iconoclasm with reference to the Prophet’s example, the number of cases where a Muslim justifies his temple destruction with a Hindu precedent is exactly zero, even by Eaton’s count.

Nevertheless, Eaton’s theory fills up the entire space given to the topic of temple destruction in the official school textbooks of history issued by India’s National Centre for Educational Research and Training. [NCERT 2011:64-66] In the section, “Why were Temples Destroyed?”, the claim is developed that temple destruction was the effect of the spirit of the times, unrelated to Islamic doctrine and just as common among Hindus:

“Because kings built temples to demonstrate their devotion to God and their power and wealth, it is not surprising that when

they attacked one another's kingdoms, they often targeted these buildings. In the early ninth century when the Pandyan king Shrimara Shrivallabha invaded Sri Lanka, the Buddhist monk and chronicler Dhammakitti noted: "he removed all the valuables (...) The statue of the Buddha made entirely of gold in the Jewel Palace (...) and the golden images in the various monasteries – all these he seized. The blow to the pride of the Sinhalese ruler had to be avenged and the next Sinhalese ruler, Sena II, ordered his general to invade Madurai, the capital of the Pandyas. The Buddhist chronicler noted that the expedition made a special effort to find and restore the gold statue of the Buddha."

Note that the Lankan army could restore the statue of the Buddha, implying that it had been preserved. In Islamic iconoclasm, the whole idea was not to preserve but to destroy the idols; and more fundamentally, to destroy the religion embodied in the idols. The Cholas left the Lankans to practice their Buddhism, just as the Lankans left the Cholas to their Shiva worship. Yet the textbook manages to equate this practice with the case of Mahmud Ghaznavi, the proverbial temple destroyer:

"Similarly in the early eleventh century, when the Chola king Rajendra I built a Shiva temple in his capital, he filled it with prized statues seized from defeated rulers. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni was a contemporary of Rajendra I. During his campaigns in the subcontinent he also attacked the temples of defeated kings and looted their wealth and idols. Sultan Mahmud was not a very important ruler at that time. But by destroying temples – especially the one at Somnath – he tried to win credit as a great hero of Islam. In the political culture of the Middle Ages most rulers displayed their political might and military success by attacking and looting the places of worship of defeated rulers."

As an introduction to temple destruction, this schoolbook manages to cite two Hindu cases, i.e. almost all they could find, and one Muslim case, concealing that it is just one among many thousands. Moreover, it artfully blurs the distinction between *looting*, i.e. carrying away as a prized good, done by a victorious king who shared the idolatrous tradition of his defeated opponent and continued it; and *destruction*, i.e. an act of contempt and hate for the idolatrous religion and meant to terminate it. But in spite of this whitewash, the NCERT authors admit that one became “a great hero of Islam” by temple destruction, implying that Islam itself justified and encouraged the practice.

In private, Hindu nationalists bemoan and curse this denial of Islamic iconoclasm, but in public, they avoid mentioning the Islamic motive. There is a notion abroad that the Hindu movement for the “liberation of Sri Ramajanamabhumī”, is anti-Islamic. In reality, while its rank and file has indeed engaged in street fights with Muslims, its spokesmen never utter criticism of Islam. On the contrary, their line is that all religions are equally valid paths to the same goal, Islam is a great religion, Mohammed was a great Prophet, and any Muslim conduct harmful to Hinduism is merely a “*perversion* of Islam at the hands of its power-drunk followers”. [Golwalkar 1996:73, emphasis added] In the Ayodhya campaign, while a handful of scholars who came forward to argue the historical case for the temple [Goel 1990-91, Chatterjee 1990, Varma 1990, Khan 1990, Narain 1993] focused on the doctrine of iconoclasm, the Hindu leaders have systematically downplayed the religious aspect of the confrontation. Thus, they avoided presenting it as an issue of “the Muslim invader Babar” versus “the Hindu hero Rama”, preferring “the foreign invader Babar” versus “the Indian hero Rama”.

In the Bharatiya Janata Party’s Palampur resolution of 11 June 1989, in which the party embraced the Ayodhya campaign, Muslim opposition to the temple’s reconstruction was blamed

not on their Islamic convictions but on intrigues by “the vile Britishers in pursuance of their policy of divide and rule”. [cit. Noorani 2003:I:xx] In Hindu nationalist discourse, if Muslims ever demolished Hindu temples, it was never for Islamic reasons. The Lucknow bench was repeating a phrase from the affidavits of both *Hindu* litigants when it opened in its verdict that building a mosque in forcible replacement of a temple is “against the tenets of Islam”. So, this is the mandatory consensus in India: if at all the fact of Muslim temple-destruction is admitted, it is at once explained away as unrelated to Islamic doctrine.

## 5. The real year of destruction

The refusal to face the seriousness of Islamic iconoclasm has landed the Hindu polemicists in a tight corner. It has allowed them to maintain that the Hindu temple from ca. 1100, of which remains have been identified by the ASI, was still standing at the time of Babar’s arrival, i.e. after 334 years of Muslim rule. Anti-temple campaigner Syed Shahabuddin explains how after several forays into the region by Muslim invaders (esp. Mahmud Ghaznavi ca. 1000 and his nephew Salar Masud Ghaznavi ca. 1030), “Ayodhya (...) was finally taken in 1194 AD. Assuming that the local dynasty had constructed a temple on the site where Babri Masjid stands (...), how did the mandir survive the ‘fanatical zeal’ of the Afghans and the Turks for nearly 350 years?” [Shahabuddin 1990/1:190] As for the temple at the site, “Was it at the pinnacle of its glory when the Turks and Pathans took Ayodhya in 1194? Did they destroy it? If they did, then Babar cannot be accused and then no temple existed when Babar or Mir Baqi constructed the Babri Masjid.” [Shahabuddin 1990/2:199]

One of the ugly aspects of the Ayodhya debate is the way polemicists have tried to neutralize opponents by simply labeling

them as “extremists” and what not; as if that made any difference to the truth or otherwise of their arguments. In this case, though Shahabuddin’s name is a by-word for Islamic fanaticism, his point is entirely valid. If there really was an Islamic practice of iconoclasm, then the massive conquest in 1194 would have been *the* occasion to display it.

Which indeed it was. In a few years’ time, practically all Buddhist establishments in the Ganga basin, including the university of Nalanda, were leveled. Unlike Hindu establishments, they were never rebuilt because the Buddhist community perished along with the institutions in which it was concentrated. Thus, in Ayodhya: “Two tombs attributed to Paigambar Sis and Ayub (i.e. patriarchs Seth and Job) occupy the site where the extraordinary ‘toothbrush’ tree of Buddha had once stood, according to Fa Hien and Huen Tsang”. [Chatterjee 1990/2:185] In some cases, monuments still pinpoint the time of destruction as that of the Ghurid invasion: “The ancient Jain temple of Adinath was destroyed by Maqdoom Shah Jooran Ghorī, a commander of Mohammed Ghorī, who later had his own tomb built on top of the ruins of Adinath, which survives till this day as Shah Jooran ka Tila.” [Chatterjee 1990/2:185] It would be strange if a Rama temple had survived where the Adinath temple perished.

On this point, the anti-temple party’s position made more sense. Since Ayodhya was a provincial capital of the Delhi Sultanate, opportunities for wresting the site from Muslim control were certainly more limited than in the case of the outlying Somnath temple, which was rebuilt again and again. Only times of infighting among the Muslim elite may have given rebellious Hindus some opportunities; but most of the time, they were in no position to challenge Muslim power by maintaining a proud idol temple right in front of a Sultanate governor’s palace.

The archaeological key lies in the layer between the Rajput temple (ca. 1100) and the Babri Masjid (1528): “For one thing, lime mortar and *surkhi* [a type of mixed cement], the recognized marks of Muslim construction, are present in practically all the excavated walls. The strong inference that the floor found below the Babri Masjid’s own floor and the walls connected with it, belonged to an earlier mosque, has now been confirmed”, according to Prof. Irfan Habib [*Hindustan Times*, 6 July 2003, repr. Noorani 2003:xxiv] “A mosque belonging to the Sultanate period was expanded to build the Babri Masjid and that is the truth no matter how the ASI interprets it”, according to Prof. Suraj Bhan. [*Outlook*, 6 Sep. 2003, repr. Noorani 2003:xxviii] In the scholars’ debate organized by the Government of India in 1990-91, both Habib and Bhan worked for the Babri Masjid Action Committee, so their objectivity will be doubted, but here their logic is valid.

Unfortunately for them, this doesn’t alter the basic moral case for the temple. Whether demolished by Shah Juran Ghorī in 1194 or by Babar in 1528, the temple became the victim of Islamic iconoclasm in either event. The site was still taken from Hindus by Muslims, and the Hindu claim is still one for restoration of what was once theirs.

But it does raise new questions. Most importantly: if a mosque stood at the disputed site during the Sultanate period, why did Babar have to build a new mosque on it? A mere redesigning of an unperturbed existing mosque would not justify renaming it after oneself, would it? An indication is given by the Hindu pillars incorporated in the Babri Masjid, following the pattern of including broken idols or other recognizably Hindu elements (but not whole idols) into mosques to visualize and celebrate the victory over Infidelism. According to Shahabuddin [1990/2:200], “the pillars do not support the mosque or the arches;

they are only used decoratively”. Physically useless, they were consequently used for another purpose, viz. as carriers of the message that on this site, Paganism had made way for Islam. The same inclusion of Infidel relics is in evidence in the Gyanvapi mosque in Varanasi, incorporating remains of the Kashi Vishvanath temple destroyed by Aurangzeb, or in the Ummayyad mosque in Damascus incorporating parts of the preceding Christian cathedral. But we don’t know whether the incorporation was ordered by Babar and Mir Baqi or by the Ghurid conquerors.

Possibly Babar did encounter a Hindu presence at the site, e.g. because in the turmoil of the war between the Sultanate and the incoming Moghuls, Hindus had found a way to recover it. Alternatively, the declining Lodis may have sought to win Hindu support by handing them the site, though covered with a mosque building. According to Eaton [2001], citing Akbar’s chronicler Nizamuddin Ahmad, “Muslim jurists advised the future Sikandar Lodi of Delhi (reign: 1489-1517) that ‘it is not lawful to lay waste ancient idol temples’”. Unlikely as it sounds, we may have to envisage the possibility that by 1528, the Sultanate mosque had become what the Babri Masjid was in 1949-1992: a mosque building serving as a temple. At any rate, for now, these are open questions calling for fresh research.

## **6. Where was Rama born?**

What has caught most attention in the Court verdict is the Court’s acceptance of the Hindu claim on the site *as Rama’s birthplace*: “When Hindus believe that the place of birth of Lord Rama was within the disputed site of an the Ayodhya temple, such belief partakes the nature of an essential part of religion and is protected under Article 25 of the Constitution (right to profess one’s religion), the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court has held.” [Venkatesan 2010]

For one, critics didn't accept that this belief was all that well-established even among Rama worshippers: "The 'faith and belief' that the Court speaks about today acquired salience only after the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party launched a political campaign in the 1980s to 'liberate' the '*janmasthan*'." [Varadrajan 2010:9] Historically, this is obviously incorrect, for the belief has already been attested in a number of European and local Muslim sources from 1608 onwards, and Hindu-Muslim clashes over the site had already taken place in 1855 and 1935. Opponents of a new temple could have argued that the pre-existence of this belief, long before the 1980s, was still no reason for the Court to endorse it; but the fact that this belief is long-standing, must be acknowledged.

The Aligarh Historians' Society (AHS), led by Irfan Habib, argues that Rama's association with the site is only attested in Sanskrit literature, where it may have been smuggled in through later interpolation, but is not in evidence in firmly datable inscriptions. The group lists, apart from three inscriptions without religious content, two pre-Muslim inscriptions referring to Ayodhya as a religious centre that mention Vedic experts, Lord Shiva and Lord Krishna, but not Lord Rama. In an inscription from ca. 1100, claimed by the temple activists to have been discovered during the Babri demolition in 1992, they find Shiva as the main deity, and Vishnu mentioned with four of his incarnations, among them "he who killed the wicked ten-headed one", i.e. Rama who killed Ravana. So, Rama only makes a peripheral appearance. They conclude: "Such is the evidence of inscriptions which unlike many Sanskrit texts can be dated fairly precisely (...) Nowhere do we find in them any remote reference to the sanctity enjoyed by Ayodhya as the birthplace of Rama." [AHS 2010:24]

That only says the worship of Rama was not yet that important before 1100, that Rama's status as a divine object



of worship only caught on gradually. It is well-known that the worship of Vishnu's incarnations grew as part of the wave of *Bhakti* (devotionalism) in the last half of the first millennium CE, along with the re-centring of cultic practices in temples, unknown in the Vedic period when worship took place in the open air. In the beginning of this wave, inscriptions celebrating Rama as a deity are few and far between in the whole of India, but the fashion finally picked up, partly in response to the Muslim conquests, when the Hindus felt the need for a warrior god.

But the initial paucity of inscriptions praising Rama says nothing about the tradition that Rama was born at the disputed site. When admirers of a famous person try to locate the house of his birth and perhaps develop it into a museum and tourist attraction (or in ancient parlance, a place of pilgrimage), they have to inquire from the locals who knew the house of his birth all along, even before he became famous, even before anyone thought of going on pilgrimage there. So, even before attracting pilgrims from all over India eager to visit Rama's birthplace, there may very well have been a local tradition about where to find the ancient castle of the Ikshvaku dynasty to which Rama belonged.

This question is part of a larger one: is the Ramayana "mere myth", as the anti-temple party insists? If not, what do we know about the location of the story's main events?

First of all, pure fantasy is a modern invention, ancient legends have typically grown around a factual core. A classical myth is rarely a "mere" myth. In the 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> century, proudly modern and skeptical of premodern beliefs, the Greek tradition of the Trojan War as described in Homer's *Iliad* was dismissed as a "mere myth". But in 1868 amateur archaeologist

Heinrich Schliemann conducted excavations in Hisarlik at the site indicated in Homer's epic and found successive cities on top of each other, one of which is now accepted by the scholarly community as the city figuring in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC war described by Homer in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. In addition, the Anatolian language group was discovered (decipherment of Hittite by Bedrich Hrozny 1915, later also Luwian), and it turned out that Troy's other name, *Ilion*, from \**Wilion*, corresponds to the Hittite place name *Wilusa*, while the name *Priam* of Troy's king is explained as a Luwian name, *Priimuua* ("very brave"). So, Homer embellished a traditional report of an actual historical event. Likewise, the Ramayana may well be an embellished evolute of a description of actual events.

Secondly, the demand for proof of the *Ramayana* only makes sense if it is possible in principle to prove the existence of a man living in the preliterate age. In the 1970s, Prof. B.B. Lal's excavation campaign "Archaeology of the Ramayana sites" [Lal 2008:15-28] found a common material culture at Ayodhya, Chitrakuta and other Ramayana sites all datable to a common period, viz. the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC. It earned him the wrath of an audience of traditional Hindu godmen, who tend to place the *Ramayana* events at a far greater time-depth. [related in Noorani 2003:I:68] (As Lal told me, his reply to them was: "I don't say so, but my spade tells me so.") Beyond that very general information, archaeology cannot bring us much closer to Rama.

Unlike in the case of Greece and Troy, no inscriptions exist from any age ever allotted to the Ramayana events, for in the Gangetic plain, literacy only appeared around the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC. The writing of the Ramayana is conventionally dated to the period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> CE. There is no chance of finding an authentic plaque: "Today Dasharatha's

son Rama was born here". Such a plaque would not be accepted as proof anyway, for there is no custom of marking birthplaces in that manner. (The Ashokan inscription marking the Buddha's supposed birthplace in Lumbini is some three centuries younger than the event concerned and merely proves that a tradition about him being born there existed, not that this tradition is historically accurate.) So, of any birth that actually took place in Ayodhya in roughly the age of Rama, there is definitely no material record, there simply cannot be one, and it is amateurish to pretend that this absence can prove anything about whether someone was born there.

## 7. Where was Ayodhya?

Concerning the location of Rama's birth, in the only source we have about him, viz. the cluster of Rama narratives, there is a near-consensus that it is Ayodhya. The one exception is the Rama narrative in the Buddhist *Jataka* 461, the *Dasharatha Jataka* (last centuries BC), which, without going in any detail about his birth, generally locates the dynasty's court in Kashi. It diverges rather much from Valmiki's Ramayana, esp. with Sita being Rama's sister before becoming his wife, possibly alluding to the close endogamy practiced in the Buddha's own Shakya tribe. The story's main point is to claim Rama as an earlier incarnation of the Buddha, which testifies to the importance Rama already enjoyed in the collective imagination during the last centuries BC.

Thus Rama is important not just in Brahminism but also in Buddhism, which launched the claim that the Buddha was a reincarnation of Rama. This story of Buddhist origin was later incorporated in the doctrine of the ten incarnations of Vishnu, now oddly rejected by the neo-Buddhists as a trick of the wily Brahmins to neutralize the Buddhist challenge to oppressive

Brahmanism. The Buddha himself and several of his best-known disciples, as well as a number of philosophers in successive phases of Buddhism, are said to have dwelled in Ayodhya or in Saketa, a settlement founded by a contemporary of the Buddha “very adjacent to and probably at the outskirts of the old town of Ayodhya” [Pandey 2009:19].

Ayodhya is important in Jainism too, which identifies it as the birthplace of some of the earlier *Tirthankaras* and has Mahavira Jina visit the town too. Rama and Ayodhya are entirely central to the *Vaishnava* school that later became known as Sikhism. Guru Govind Singh claimed Rama as a direct paternal ancestor for both founder Guru Nanak and for himself. Which is why Guru Nanak went on pilgrimage to Ayodhya shortly before Babar’s invasion where he claims to have had Rama’s *darshan* (solemn seeing of the deity, in practice: of the deity’s temple idol), though without giving details of where exactly and in what conditions. [details in Singh 1991]

To all who have continued to care about Rama, there is no other birthplace for him than Ayodhya. This also fits in with the larger Puranic narrative of ancient India, confirmed in other Buddhist sources, which locate the entire Ikshvaku dynasty and its ancestor Manu in Ayodhya.

There is admittedly a problem with the continuity at the site. Hindu tradition itself (chiefly the *Skanda Purana*) has it that after Rama, his city was abandoned by its population and later rediscovered. This tallies with Buddhist testimony: “The early Buddhist literature, however, mentions the occurrence of flood at the place and it may have caused the migration of the population to some place nearby.” [Pandey 2009:16] The rediscovery is ascribed to one Vikramaditya, taken by traditionalists to be the founder of the Vikram Samvat calendar in 57 BC,

while secularists identify the name as the honorific of Chandragupta II, ca. 400 CE. Skeptics may say that this tradition masks a purely arbitrary identification of a convenient site with the prestigious but by then legendary and lost Ayodhya of yore (the way Krishna devotee Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in 1515 decided by means of visionary intuition the location of Vrindavan, the place where Krishna grew up). However, Buddhist and Jain sources, generally more securely datable than epic and Puranic data, assure a continuity in their location of Saketa/Ayodhya (names alternately referring to different parts of the city or to the city as a whole) from centuries before the first to centuries after the second Vikramaditya.

Even the one major revisionist theory concerning the Ramayana's geography confirms this location. H.D. Sankalia, in his book *Ramayana, Myth or Reality?* (published by a Communist house), argues that the *Ramayana*'s southern toponyms Kishkindha and Lanka refer to places in or north of the Vindhya mountains, because the core data of landscape and flora fit those areas and not more southerly ones. He concludes: "Lanka of this Ravana was in the Chotanagpur plateau (...) probably near Jabalpur. All this area, *Ramayana* expressly tells us, was included in Rama's kingdom, i.e. (southern) Kosala; (...) Thus in the original *Ramayana*, the entire episode took place in a compact geographical area." [Sankalia 1991:60-61] "But the mistake started with the wrong identification of the river Godavari, and Dandakaranya. The *Ramayana* clearly mentions that they were within easy reach of the hill Chitrakuta. Here were Panchavati, Rishyamuka, Pampa, Kishkindha and Lanka (...) north of the Narbada." [Sankalia 1991:46]

Yet by the same yardstick he finds in favour of the classical locations of Ayodhya and the nearer toponyms: "Rama was an illustrious descendant of the Ikshvaku dynasty with its capital

at Ayodhya. For this statement though there is no contemporary (historical) record, still this fact is vouchsafed by all the Puranas and early Jain and Buddhist traditions which are not later than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.” [Sankalia 1991:42] “What has resulted from the archaeological approach to the Ramayana is briefly this: (i) there is no doubt that the existence of Ayodhya and other cities mentioned in the Ramayana such as Kausambi, Mithila, Kanyakubja at least by 1000 BC; (...) (iii) the core of the Ramayana story – viz. Rama, Sita, Lakṣmana and the exile of Rama with Sita and her being abducted by Ravana – was true (...)” [Sankalia 1991:60-61] As for the chronology: “The origins of the Ur-Ramayana might go back to a period between 1500 and 1000 BC”. [Sankalia 1991:57] The expansion of its geographical horizon to include South India followed later: “The greatest interpolation seems to have taken place between the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, when descriptions of Lanka, Ayodhya, Kishkindha came to be entirely recomposed.” [Sankalia 1991:61]

Among the changes effected in the narrative, one was to bring the material setting up to date. The classical narrative has the heroes use chariots and metal weapons, including even the fanciful *vimana*, a kind of helicopter. But the core data are far more primitive: Rama uses the bow and arrow, a prehistoric weapon, and Hanuman even uses a mace, the crudest weapon of all. Those who cling to a high chronology for the *Ramayana* events, and who are disappointed by the failure of the archaeologists to find any buildings there at an appropriate time-depth, might take heart from this insight: perhaps Rama’s original “palace” was a primitive and perfectly perishable construction? As Sankalia [1991:44] notes:

“We are told that when Kaushalya learnt of Rama’s exile, she fainted and fell down on the floor and her body was covered

with dust. (2:15:18) But if this floor was made of brick or made with stones, as the palaces are supposed to be, how or why should there be dust on the floor? I think this small insignificant detail, overlooked by the poet, possibly gives us a clue to the real nature of the original houses at Ayodhya. These houses, though big, should be of mud or mud-brick, as has been exposed in our excavations outside the Indus civilization.”

But even then, Sankalia implies, such primitive habitation tends to leave at least some traces for archaeologists to discover, which have not been found in Ayodhya prior to 1300 BC. So for now, the data cannot satisfy the traditionalists: either Rama lived elsewhere, or he lived at an age much later than what Hindu tradition teaches.

The last straw for them to clutch at, is the new hypothesis that a flood took place in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, due to tectonic events that also caused a shift in the Yamuna’s riverbed which originally fed into the Saraswati (making it the mighty stream described in the *Rg-Veda* until, after this shift of its main tributary’s course, it shriveled and ran dead at a place in the desert to which Krishna’s brother Balarama went on pilgrimage during the *Mahabharata* battle). This flood destroyed the archaeological evidence of Rama’s Ayodhya: “The floods had washed away the constructions of this period. All the archaeological remains (...) were of the post-flood period and nothing before.” [Hari & Hari 2010:80] This fits with Buddhist literary testimony of a flood, as mentioned. In that case, the search can start all over.

## 8. Respecting “faith”

Plenty of protest has been made against the Allahabad High Court’s ruling that “this was Rama’s birthplace”. The anti-temple

party reacted furiously that “we cannot accept ‘faith’ in place of hard evidence”. [Ghosh 2010:25] “The verdict has annulled respect for history and seeks to replace history with religious faith.” [Thapar 2010:20] “A premise of modernity is that (...) ‘beliefs’ cannot be accepted as ‘facts’, that there has to be independent and credible evidence on the basis of which alone a ‘fact’ can be established. Hence the verdict of the Lucknow bench that Rama was born at the very spot which was the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Babri Masjid, because ‘people’ believed this to the case, is as mystifying as it is retrograde. (...) to take the ‘beliefs’ of the ‘people’, even assuming they are indeed well-established beliefs of a very large number of people, as synonymous with ‘facts’, strikes at the very root of the rationality that must underlie a modern society.” [Patnaik 2010:34-35]

So, an impression has been created that the decision to treat the site as Rama’s birthplace in deference to a widely held belief is unusual and scandalous. But is it? To get a fair picture, let us compare with how the Indian and other governments deal with similar beliefs of other religions. Consider the following examples.

Outside India, we find that militantly anti-Catholic governments of France, the cradle of secularism, have protected the pilgrimage to Lourdes where the girl Bernadette Soubirou claimed to have seen apparitions of the Virgin Mary in 1858. In Israel, the government protects the Holy Sepulchre church, built on the site where supposedly Jesus Christ lay buried before his resurrection. There is no proof for the resurrection; and the site, where a Hellenistic Pagan temple stood until Emperor Constantine ordered it demolished to make way for this church, was chosen on the strength of a “revelation” that Constantine’s mother Helen received in a dream. Israel has never asked the



Christians to first offer proof for this belief, nor does it ask Muslims to prove their impossible tradition that Mohammed flew on a winged horse to land on the hill where the Dome on the Rock and the Al-Aqsa mosque are now standing.

In India, the state makes the (mostly Hindu) taxpayers subsidize the *Hajj*, the Muslim pilgrimage to the *Kaaba* in Mecca, without asking for proof of their claim that it was built by Adam. Also in India, millions of man-hours are lost to the economy because some 15% of the population are given an official holiday to celebrate the Prophet's birthday, even though there is no proof nor even a scriptural claim that Mohammed was indeed born on that day (though that day of the year is mentioned as the day he died). So, as Dr. Subramaniam Swamy [2010:32], a late convert to Hindu nationalism, has argued: neither should Hindus be required to offer proof for their religious traditions.

The legend that the Apostle Thomas brought Christianity to Kerala in 52 CE is routinely repeated by politicians, on taxpayer-funded monuments and in governmental publications. Yet there is neither textual nor archaeological support for this belief, and in a speech on 27 September 2006, even Pope Benedict XVI denied that Saint Thomas came to South India, saying instead that Thomas reached "Western India, from where Christianity reached South India". [Anathakrishnan 2006]

Indeed, the one ancient text on which the legend is based, the apocryphal *Acts of Thomas*, takes the Apostle in a slave caravan (after being sold into slavery by his twin-brother Jesus!) to a desert-like country where the names are Persian: this could be Afghanistan, part of "India" broadly conceived, but not lush Kerala. When the people turn against him because of his anti-social acts, including abduction of women and cruel miracles against insufficiently docile children, the king asks him to leave,

but he refuses and gets killed right there in punishment of his crimes; which excludes an after-story that still might have taken Thomas to Kerala. So, whereas the story of Rama in Ayodhya at least has a textual tradition in its support, Thomas in Kerala doesn't even have that. There is even less authentic support for the claim that Thomas was murdered by Brahmins in Chennai on the site of the present-day San Thomé church, a blood libel which again is consecrated by media repetition and in governmental publications. [discussed in Sharan 2010] None of the campaigners against the Ayodhya temple is known to have stood up against these "mere myths".

So, secular governments respect unverified and even untenable beliefs, including some that conflict with the laws of nature. By contrast, the belief that person X was born at site Y, even when unverified, is at least perfectly within the bounds of natural possibility. If Rama's life and times remain unconfirmed by archaeology, and even if we choose to disregard the textual tradition, respect for the beliefs about him is merely of one piece with the respect paid to beliefs of other religions.

## 9. Why this controversy?

Until 1989 there had been no dispute about the site's history. *All* the written sources that spoke out on the matter, whether Hindu, Muslim or European, were in agreement about the pre-existence of a Rama temple at the site. In the court case about the disputed site in 1885, neither the Muslim litigants nor the British judge denied it; the latter merely ruled that, regrettable as a temple demolition was, it was too long ago now to bother remedying it. "Rama's birthplace is marked by a mosque, erected by the Moghul emperor Babar in 1528 on the site of an earlier temple", according to the 1989 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, entry "Ayodhya".

Neither was there any document contradicting this scenario by substantiating an alternative scenario. Thus, there is no account of a forest chopped down to make way for the mosque (already unlikely in the centre of an ancient city), no sales contract of real estate to the mosque's builder, nothing of the kind. By contrast, there was testimony after testimony of Hindus bewailing and Muslims boasting of the replacement of the temple by a mosque; and of Hindus under Muslim rule coming as close as possible to the site in order to celebrate Rama's birthday every year in April. This they did in apparent continuation of the practice at the time when the temple stood, and shows how to them not the building but the site itself was sacred.

In the 1980s, there were no spectacular discoveries that called for a revision of the old consensus. On the contrary, whatever new evidence came to light, such as Tieffenthaler's travelogue, only confirmed it. So, there really was no reason to open a debate on Ayodhya's history. And the debate that did take place, was marred by shrillness, slanging-matches, allegations *ad hominem*, rhetorical sleight-of-hand, gross absolutes where nuance was called for, and total politicization. The worst of it was that it missed the point. In a sane society, the history of the site would not have been all that important for a satisfactory decision regarding the future of the disputed site.

Today's reality should provide enough guidance. The simple fact is that millions of Hindus with a reverence for Rama, including Sikhs, go on pilgrimage to Ayodhya and in particular to the *Rama Janmabhumi* site. No Muslim or Christian, no Jew or Zoroastrian, cares for Ayodhya the way these Hindu pilgrims do. In these circumstances, the normal human thing to do is to leave the site to the people who consider it sacred. The attitude of the anti-temple Muslims and secularists is that of a playground bully: grabbing the toys dear to other kids, not because he has any

use for them himself, but simply for the pleasure of acting out his power to inflict this loss and humiliation on others.

The solution for this conflict lies in the application of the Golden Rule: do not do unto others what you don't want them to do to you. Do Muslims want non-Muslims to take over the *Kaaba*? Do they even want to share the *Kaaba* with non-Muslims? If not, then they should not want to occupy any Hindu sacred site. The right thing to do is so obvious: all those who have no reason to go on pilgrimage to Ayodhya, should give up all claims to the site and leave it unconditionally to those who do. This moral principle, not to demand from others the kind of thing you wouldn't want them to take from you, is so natural that the really worthy object for Ayodhya research should be: what ideological motives and political mechanisms have led to the violation of this principle, not just by *jihadi* ideologues, but by professors and intellectuals who claim to be the enlightened ("secular") elite in India?

## 10. The ongoing struggle

The contemporary political and intellectual struggle over the site's future started in right earnest with the opening of the building for unfettered use as a Hindu temple by Court order in 1986. The history of this struggle remains to be written, and much data are not in yet; not everyone has cared to commit his own memories to paper, as Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister in 1991-96, has done [Rao 2006]. As a first step, we now point out a central mistake in the common view of the struggle as upheld by the media and most India-watchers.

Everyone has heard of BJP leader L.K.Advani's role as the face of the temple movement in 1989-92, but few people know of the role of others in furthering the temple plan. These

include on the one hand the independent scholars mentioned above who, in the absence of competent spokesmen from the BJP and other Hindu nationalist organizations, argued the pro-temple case in formal and informal forums; and on the other, the Congress Party. Indeed, and perhaps surprisingly, we can show that the Congress Party under Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao worked fairly consistently towards an arrangement of leaving the site to the Hindus while compensating the Muslims with other favours. By contrast, the BJP's role was erratic and ultimately harmful to its own stated pro-temple objective.

In 1983, Gulzarilal Nanda, twice interim Prime Minister of India, and Dau Dayal Khanna, former Minister in the Uttar Pradesh government, participated in a Hindu Conference in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh. Both were, of course, members of the Congress Party. Describing the mosques superimposed on *Rama Janmabhumi*, on *Krishna Janmasthan* in Mathura and on Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi as challenges to Hindu self-esteem, Khanna made an appeal for their liberation. The conference then proceeded to pass a resolution for the liberation of these three sites. The *Sri Rama Janmabhumi Mukti Yajna Samiti* (Liberation Committee) was formed with Mahant Avaidyanath as president and Khanna himself as general secretary. So, from the start, when the BJP was still a small party with only 4 seats in the Lok Sabha, the major political involvement in the Ayodhya movement was from the Congress.

The Allahabad High Court's lengthy verdict of 2010 was in the main a victory for the Hindu claimants. It established that the Babri Masjid had been built on a Hindu religious site (regardless of differences of opinion about Babar's own role in the demolition and about the degree of the site's sacredness to Hindus at the time when the temple was demolished, whether in 1194 or 1528) of imposed respect for the well-attested Hindu

convention of treating the site as Rama's birthplace. This victory, we propose, was the ultimate result of a wise policy pursued by Congress Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao. They discreetly promoted the long-term project of rebuilding a Hindu temple at the contentious site by linking the decision about the site's future to the historical question about its past. The consensus in all pertinent testimonies by Muslims, Hindus and Europeans, still upheld as dry fact in the most complete scholarly book on religious Ayodhya [Bakker 1986:133-135] and in the 1989 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, was that a Rama temple had been forcibly replaced by the mosque attributed to Babar.

In a typical exercise of Congress culture, Rajiv Gandhi intended to preserve peace by leaving the site to the Hindus, who were already using it as a temple since 1949 anyway, all while compensating the Muslim leadership for its acquiescence with some appropriate favours, starting with the Shah Bano amendment that brought divorce law for Muslims in conformity with the *Shari'a* in 1986, and the ban on Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses* in September 1988. Not very principled, but pragmatic and likely to avoid bloodshed. His confidants N.D. Tiwari, Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and Home Minister Buta Singh okayed the Vishva Hindu Parishad's plan to lay the first stone for the temple outside the Babri Masjid on 9 November 1989. Buta Singh reportedly suggested that "Rajiv Gandhi be allowed to lay the foundation stone". [Noorani 1989:151] As opposition leader in 1990, Rajiv Gandhi wrote to the Supreme Court panel on Ayodhya: "Our party is for the building of the temple to Lord Ram, and we should, if possible, work towards an amicable settlement which, while upholding the principles of secularism, enables the construction of the temple to start, with the approval and support of all concerned." [cit. *Indian Express*, 2 Dec. 1990, repr. Aggarwal & Chowdhry 1991:123]

So, the secular Congress Party was not averse to pleasing the Hindu part of its constituency by allowing the temple reconstruction project to proceed. This was not an extremist pet project of the Hindu nationalist fringe, but the considered plan of the political mainstream. However, the plan was upset by two developments.

One was the shrill and intimidating campaign of history denial by a section of partisan academics and journalists, with most Western India-watchers in their pocket. Screaming “secularism in danger!” and raising the stakes beyond all proportion, they continued to dominate public discourse until at least 30 September 2010. They managed to turn the old consensus into a mere “claim” by “Hindu extremists”. But Rajiv Gandhi tried to call their bluff. As opposition leader extending support to a minority government in 1990-91, he forced Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar to organize a scholars’ debate, where newly presented evidence only confirmed the old consensus view. His idea, as explained in his statement to the Supreme Court panel on Ayodhya, was to link the course to be followed with the history of the site: “The key issue appears to be whether or not there was a temple erected to Lord Ram at the site where the Babri Masjid stands today. This question of historical fact would appear to hold the key to a resolution of the problem to the satisfaction of all reasonable, secular-minded persons of all communities.” [cit. *Indian Express*, 2 Dec. 1990, repr. Aggarwal & Chowdhry 1991:123] The anti-temple academics got no farther than questioning a selected few of the documents and archaeological findings. [details in Elst 2002:146-188] They withdrew from the talks, and their argumentation [Sharma et al., 1991] was later published by a Communist publishing-house.

The second obstruction was the BJP’s erratic intervention. First the party capitalized on the issue in a mass campaign, but after reaping the dividend in the 1991 elections, when it became

the largest opposition party, it effectively dropped the matter. Many party leaders never had their hearts in it, e.g. Sushma Swaraj revealed her mind later when she dismissed the movement as “of a purely political nature” that “had nothing to do with religion” [*Telegraph*, 16 April 2000, repr. Noorani 2003:I:xviii]. And those who did, realized it was a hot potato with possible consequences that might be hard to control (a result of the confrontationist route they had chosen, and which the Congress had tried to avoid), and they didn’t have the stamina for that.

This “betrayal” by the BJP (along with the Supreme Court’s dithering in okaying the Government’s acquisition of the disputed land so as to allow it to prepare for the temple’s construction) provoked some Hindu activists into bypassing their leaders and taking the surprise initiative of demolishing the mosque structure on 6 December 1992. Contrary to the impression propagated by the media, the top leaders definitely opposed and deplored this move. On the film footage of the demolition, you see Murli Manohar Joshi laughing in exhilaration, but BJP chairman Advani breaking out in tears. Demolition activists later said that VHP leader Ashok Singhal had pleaded with them to stop, and that they had threatened to pull off his *dhoti* (loincloth) to make him shut up. On 17 December 1992 in the Lok Sabha, BJP leader A.B. Vajpayee deplored the demolition.

The operation had been prepared by a few middle-level Hindu activists with technical know-how; once they set to work, the crowd joined in. The Indian media oddly refrained from finding out their identities and splashing their names and pictures on their covers as the scoop of the year. Instead they chose to pin all the blame on Advani so as to maximize the damage to the BJP. From 6 December 1992, the Ayodhya debate shifted completely from the medieval temple demolition to the recent mosque demolition. The Commission of Enquiry led by Justice



M.S. Liberhan, constituted on 16 Dec. 1992, presented its Report in Parliament on 30 June 2009, and found the entire Hindu movement including RSS, VHP and BJP guilty, indicting 68 leaders by name, while also allotting some blame to Narasimha Rao's Government for not intervening. [Liberhan 2009]

Meanwhile back in the early 1990s, Narasimha Rao stayed the course. All while exploiting the BJP's embarrassment over the demolition and making the right noises to humour the anti-temple circles, he arranged a Presidential reference to the Supreme Court on the question of the pre-existence of a temple at the site. This way, once more a Congress PM directed the focus of the controversy to the historical evidence, knowing fully well that this could only bolster the Hindu claim. Addressing the Court on 14 September 1994, the Solicitor-General made the link explicit: "If the question referred is answered in the affirmative, namely, that a Hindu temple/structure did exist prior to the construction of the BM, then government action will be in support of the wishes of the Hindu community. If in the negative (...) government action will be in support of the wishes of the Muslim community." [cit. Noorani 2003:II:259]

In 1995 the Supreme Court turned down the Government's request, which, in effect, sent the question on to the Allahabad High Court. In 2002, this Court ordered a thorough investigation of the site. By summer 2003, the results were in: *of course* there had been a temple. On these findings, and on the link between past history and present policy proposed by the Congress Government in 1994, the Court based its verdict of 2010.

## 11. Conclusion

In 1947, the Babri Masjid was an empty building shielded from the public by Government order. Hindu devotees started

agitating for unlimited Hindu access and for its replacement with proper Hindu architecture, not at the initiative of but with increasing participation from the VHP, and ultimately with official support from the BJP. At the political level, however, not the Hindu nationalist BJP but the Congress Party has been the main driving force in the gradual acceptance of the Hindu claim to the disputed site. By repeatedly linking policy to the question of the site's history, it favoured a pro-temple outcome.

The Ayodhya verdict of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court has directed the focus once more to the historical evidence. Of the pre-existence of a Hindu temple at the site, the evidence is definitive, though the details about its history between the first temple demolition in 1194 and Babar's intervention remain elusive. Of Rama's life and whereabouts, no evidence could ever be final, but the Court has taken the position that it should respect Hindu traditional lore about its sacred sites as much as that of other religions. This restores normalcy where Hindus had felt treated as second-class citizens.

By that standard, the whole history debate was an unnecessary distraction. Establishing historical truth is interesting and important for its own sake, but it should not be a precondition for respecting fellow human beings in their religious practices. For settling this dispute, the consideration that the site is sacred not to Muslims but very much to Hindus, and not in the Middle Ages but *today*, really ought to have been sufficient.

## Bibliography

Aligarh Historians Society 2010: History and the Judgment of the Allahabad High Court (Lucknow Bench) in the Ram Janmabhumi –Babri Masjid Case, *SAHMAT*, Delhi.

Anathakrishnan, G., 2006: “Thomas’s visit under doubt”, *Times of India*, 26 Dec. 2006.

Archeological Survey of India, 2003: *Ayodhya, 2002-2003: Examination at the Disputed Site*, Delhi.

Bakker, Hans, 1986: *Ayodhya*, Egbert Forsten, Groningen.

Beveridge, Annette Susannah, tra., and Hiro, Dilip, ed., 2006: *Babur Nama, Journal of Emperor Babur*, Penguin.

Chatterjee, A.K., 1990/1: “Ram Janmabhoomi: some more evidence”, *Indian Express*, 27 March 1990, repr. in *Goel* 1998:176-182.

—, 1990/2: “The temple and the mosque”, *Indian Express*, 2 May 1990, repr. in *Goel* 1998:184-189.

Desai, Radhika, 2004: Slouching towards Ayodhya. From Congress to Hindutva in Indian Politics, *Three Essays Collective*, Delhi (2003).

Eaton, Richard, 2000: “Temple desecration in pre-modern India”, *Frontline*, 22 Dec. 2000.

—, 2001: “Temple desecration and Indo-Muslim states”, *Frontline*, 5 Jan 2001.

Elliott, H.M., and Dowson, J., 1952: *The History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, London 1867-77, repr. Aligarh.

Elst, Koenraad, 1992: *Ayodhya: The Case against the Temple*, *Voice of India*, Delhi.

—, 1993: *Ayodhya, the Finale. Science vs. Secularism in the Excavations Debate*, *Voice of India*, Delhi.

Engineer, Asghar Ali, ed., 1990: *Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhumi Controversy*, Delhi: Ajanta Publ.

Habib, Irfan, et al., 2009: *After Ayodhya, Reclaiming the Secular*, *Sahmat*, Delhi.

Foster, William, 1921: *Early Travels in India 1583-1619*, London.  
Ghosh, Shohini: “Faith cannot be the basis of any judgment”, in *SAHMAT* 2010, p.24-25 (*Hindustan Times*, 5 Oct. 2010).

Goel, Sita Ram, 1990-91: *Hindu Temples, What Happened to Them*, 2 vols., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *Voice of India*, Delhi.

—, 1993: *Hindu Temples, What Happened to Them*, vol.2, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *Voice of India*, Delhi.

—, 1998: *Hindu Temples, What Happened to Them*, vol.1, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., *Voice of India*, Delhi.

Golwalkar, M.S., 1996: *Bunch of Thoughts*, Sahitya Sindhu Prakashan, Bangalore (1966).

Goradia, Prafull, 2003: *Hindu Masjids*, Contemporary Targett Prafull, Delhi.

Guillaume, Alfred, 1987: *The Life of Mohammed. A translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (8<sup>th</sup> impression), OUP, Karachi.

Hari, D.K., and Hari, D.K. Hema, 2010: *Ayodhya, War and Peace*, Bharath Gyan & Sri Sri Publications Trust, Bangalore.

JNU historians, 1989: *The Political Abuse of History: Babri Masjid Ram Janmabhumi Dispute*, JNU Centre for Historical Studies, Delhi.

Khan, A.R., 1990: "In the name of 'history'", *Indian Express*, 25 February 1990, repr. *Goel* 1998:243-252 (with sequel, p.260-263).

Lal, B.B., 2008: *Râma, His Historicity, Mandir and Setu*, Aryan Books, Delhi.

Mandal, D., and Ratnagar, Shereen, 2007: *Ayodhya, Archaeology after Excavation*, Tulika Books, Delhi.

Narain, Harsh, 1993: *The Ayodhya Temple/Mosque Dispute. Focus on Muslim Sources*, *Penman*, Delhi.

Nath, R., 1991: *The Baburi Masjid of Ayodhya*, Historical Research Documentation Programme, Jaipur.

NCERT, 2011: *History – Our Pasts, part II* (Social Science textbook for class 7), Delhi.

Noorani, A.G., 1989: "Congress agreed to Ram Shilanyas", *Radiance*, November 1989, repr. *Engineer* 1990, p.149-155.

—, 1990: "The Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi question", in *Engineer* 1990, p.56-78.

—, 2003: *The Babri Masjid Question 1528-2003*, 2 vols., Tulika Books, Delhi.

Liberhan, M.S., 2009: *Report of the Liberhan Ayodhya Commission of Enquiry*, Government of India, Delhi.

Pandey, Lalita Prasad, 2009: *Ayodhya, the Abode of Rama and the Dharmaksetra of Lord Buddha and the Jain Tirthankaras. A Historical and Cultural Study*, Munshiram Manoharlal, Delhi.

Pandit, Kashinath, tra., 2009: A Muslim Missionary in Mediaeval Kashmir (Tohfatu'l-Ahbab), *Voice of India*, Delhi.

Patnaik, Prabhat, 2010: “On the Allahabad High Court verdict”, in *People's Democracy*, 10 October 2010, repr. *SAHMAT* 2010, p.34-39.

Rai, Champat, 2011: *Sri Ram Janmabhumi: The Suits, the Verdict, and the Facts of the Case*, 16 Jan. 2011, <http://www.vijayvaani.com/FrmPublicDisplayArticle.aspx?id=1586>

Rao, P.V. Narasimha, 2006: *Ayodhya, 6 December 1992*, Penguin, Delhi.

*SAHMAT*, 2010: *On the Ayodhya Judgment of the Allahabad High Court*, Delhi.

Shahabuddin, Syed, 1990/1: “The basic issue”, *Indian Express*, 27 March 1990, repr. in *Goel* 1998.189-193.

—, 1990/2: “Ram Janmabhoomi”, *Indian Express*, 28 July 1990, repr. in *Goel* 1998.198-201.

Sharan, Ishwar, 2010: *The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., *Voice of India*, Delhi (1991).

Sharma, R.S., et al., 1991: *Ram Janmabhumi-Babri Masjid: A Historians' Report to the Nation*, People's Publishing House, Delhi.

Singh, Rajendra, 1991: *Sikkh Itihas men Ram Janmabhumi*, Bhârat-Bhârâtî, Delhi.

Srivastava, Sushil, 1991: *The Disputed Mosque*, Vistaar, Delhi.  
Swamy, Subramaniam, 2010: "Faith and law as basis in Ayodhya judgment", in Yadav & Banerjee 2010, p.30-36.

Thapar, Romila, 2010: "The verdict on Ayodhya: a historian's perspective", in *SAHMAT* 2010, p.18-20.

Varadraj, Siddharth, 2010: "Force of faith trumps law and reason in Ayodhya case", in *SAHMAT* 2010, p.18-20 (from *The Hindu*, 1 Oct. 2010).

Venkatesan, J., 2010: "Hindus' belief about Lord Rama's birthplace protected under Article 25", *The Hindu*, 2 Oct. 2010.

Verma, G.L., 1990: *Conversion of Hindu Temples*, Shabad Prakashan, Delhi .

Yadav, Bhupender, and Banerjee, Vikramjeet, 2010: *Ayodhya Verdict, Faith or Law? Archaeology as Evidence*, India Foundation, Delhi. This paper was read at the Torchinov Orientalist Conference in St-Petersburg, Russian Federation, June 2011.

# **GLIMPSES OF SRI KALLARPIRAN TEMPLE, SRIVAIKUNTAM**

**Dr. S. MURUGAVEL**

*Associate Professor,  
PG. And Research Department of History  
Govt. Arts. College, Melur, Madurai*

Sri Kallarpiran Temple, Srivaikuntam is the fifty-third (53) in the series of the 108 Divya desas dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Srivaikuntam is located 37 Kilometers from Tirunelveli on the Northern bank of the river Thambraparani. It has an area of 5.60 Square miles and was formerly included in the Tirunelveli District and is now located in the Toothukudi District carved out of Tirunelveli District on 20.10.1986.

Sri Kallarpiran temple was built during the period of the early Pandyas<sup>1</sup>. Srivaikuntam temple is a vast and impressive complex of structures, enclosed by high and massive compound walls occupying a rectangular plot of land. The temple measures 580 feet from East to West and 396 feet from South to North, roughly occupying an area of 5.25 acres. The *Rajagopura* with nine storeys and the main entrance face the eastern direction. Its height is one hundred and ten feet. This is the third highest Vaishnava temple tower (*Gopura*) in Tamil Nadu, one after Srirangam and Srivilliputtur.

The temple epigraphs mention the date of construction and the person responsible for the same. The earliest inscription belongs to the Chola period in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and is found on the eastern wall, inside of the *Mahamandapa*. It states that



the grant of land located in Varaguna-Mangalam to the Srikallarpiran temple for a perpetual lamp and for feeding ten Brahmins was made by Adigal Niradi alias Parakirama Muvendavelan. The Mahasabha of Varaguna Mangalam made land free from taxes<sup>2</sup>.

Not only the temple epigraphs of this age but also some literary works reconstruct the history of this temple. Thiruvaimoli is a seventh century literary work, which refers to Srivaikuntam and its temple<sup>3</sup>. This is the first and earliest reference to the primary deity, Srivaikunthanathar. Madurakavialvar of the 8<sup>th</sup> century composed Kannirchiruthampu<sup>4</sup> in praise of the presiding deity of this temple. Diviya Kavipillai Perumal Iyengar of the seventeenth century, composed one hundred and eight Tirupati on Srivaikuntam in praise of the presiding deity of this temple. This temple is also referred to in *Thambiraparani-Sthala, Puranam (Sanskrit) Srivaikuntha Manmiyam and U.V. Annanda Krishna Iyengars, Thanipa Manchari Oru pattu*<sup>5</sup>.

Local tradition says that during the Pandya rule, Kalathusan son of Veeraguptha lived in a forest adjoining Srivaikuntam. Due to his activities in the earlier birth, he was born to live as a thief with many of his followers. Before he started to commit robbery he deeply worshipped Lord Vaikunthar daily. On the agreement of equal share of the booty offered to the Lord, after committing every theft, he used to give half of the plunder to Lord Vaikuntapathy and the remaining half he shared among his comrades and spent for helping the poor. Poor people praised him<sup>6</sup>.

The thefts were made known to the king, who ordered his soldiers to catch the thief. While his soldiers, on the order of the king were searching for the thieves, some of them were caught red-handed, while stealing in the palace and were produced

before the king. They also gave information about their head Kalathusan and were ready to identify him in order to arrest him. On knowing this Kalathusan appealed to Lord Vaikunthanathar to save him and surrendered to him. Accordingly, the thieves with soldiers proceeded to catch Kalathusan. Lord Vaikuntapathy came under the disguise of Kalathusan and was arrested. The soldiers took Him to the king's court. On seeing the disguised Kalathusa, the king asked him "You seem to be noble and handsome; why have you resorted to thieving?" The Lord replied to the king that wealth not spent for good and Dharma is liable to be destroyed by fire or will be seized by the rulers or thieves. Truth and good sense immediately dawned upon him. The king fell at the feet of the Lord and praised him as Kallarpiran. The king gave an apology to Kalathusa. This is how Lord Vaikunthanathar came to be known as Kallarpiran<sup>7</sup>.

Sri Kallarpiran temple was constructed by the ruler of Manappadai Veedu<sup>8</sup>. The primary idol deity is made of *salagrām* stone and hence the gateway that is in its front has become the principal entrance.<sup>9</sup> Inside this walled enclosure, a series of concentric courtyards is noticed around the central nucleus, on which is located the main sanctum of Lord Kallarpiran. There are thus four courtyards in the temple and the local Srivaishnavas would add the *madavidhi* or the main street around the temple as the fifth one<sup>10</sup>. The narrow closed passage is immediately around Thalavarisai Prakara, the third Nachiyar Prakāra, the fourth is known as Nandavana Prakara and the fifth or the last is known as the outer *prakara*. The five *prakāras* represent the five elements of nature, earth, water, fire, sky and air.<sup>11</sup>

The first-*prakāra* is the *Garbhagrāhā* (Karuvarai) *prakāra*, a platform shape encircling the sanctum sanctorum on three sides. The *prakāra* walls encircle it, leaving the front portion of the

*Garbhagrāhā* in which three doors are fixed. To enter it just before and opposite to the *Garbhagrāhā* a door leading west-wards and the door at north and south is provided close to rear and the *Ardhamandapā*. The *Garbhagrāhā* is covered with a wall on the north, south and west. On the eastern side there is no wall, but double half doors with five bells fixed on each half door. The entry to it is provided by a door on the wall. On the walls between the *Thalavarisai prakāra* and *garbhagrāhā prakāra*, on the west, north and south walls, there are painted matters defining the incarnations of Vishnu. On the roof, Ramayana epics pictures are also painted and are assumed to have been done in the 17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>12</sup>.

Lord Vaikuntapathy is standing in a yoga pose holding a mace in his hand. He is alone with Adhishesan with his head's hoods using it as an umbrella. He is also known as Palpandyan. The beauty of the Lord is most admirable as he is wearing, glittering gold covering plates all over the body. With a beaming face he gives *darshan* to the devotees<sup>13</sup>. The Lord was also called Karumanikkatalvar, Nintarulumpiran and Kallarpiran<sup>14</sup>. In 1198 A.D. the 20<sup>th</sup> Regnal year of Kulothunga I, the Maha Sabha of Rajendra Chola Chathurvethimangalam in Thiruvaluthivalanadu sold the land to Karumanikkatalvar who was pleased to stand at Srivaikuntam. This inscription is found at the second *prakara* in stone<sup>15</sup>.

The presiding deity is named Kallarpiran. It is a copper idol 2 ½ feet in height standing in a golden palanquin with Boomadevi, Sridevi, Vaikunthanayaki and Soranayaki. Kallarpirans, the golden chest cover is removed only in the Tamil month of Vaikasi and cleaned and polished. On that day *Abhisekham* is done to the original image. This is called *Seshtar abhisekhā*<sup>16</sup>. This temple is considered as representing the Sun God. The Lord is far away from the entrance to the temple in the *sanctum*

*sanctorium* with Indira Vimanam of 42 feet height on its top, facing east. It is stated that the rays of the morning sun fall on the face of the Lord crossing all entries to the temple twice in a year. This is stated to be on the sixth day of *Chitrai* and *Iyypasi* months but it is on the full moon day only. On such days a *puja* for the sun also is performed<sup>17</sup>. *Archa* figures can be seen and so in that stage the Lord appears in three different poses like reclining, standing and sitting. At Varagunamangai, the Lord is in calm sitting posture, at Tiruppuliyangudi in reclining posture and at Srivaikuntam in standing posture and all those three postures are co jointly praised by Nammalvar<sup>18</sup>.

Srikallarpiran shrine was a small structure before the eighth century A.D. The presiding deity, Lord Kallarpiran is in copper metal. Casting of images in bronze by the lost wax process was increasingly practiced from the later Pallava period. So it can be assumed that the temple was constructed before the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.

At the entrance of the *sanctum sanctorum*, there are two statues in stone called as *dvārapālakas* on each side. They are the security guards and gatekeeper and watchmen. They are pleased to receive devotees and extend a welcome, and they report to God about the presence of devotees<sup>19</sup>. The southern statue is called Sandan, and northern is called Birasandan. The length of the *garbhagrā* is 46 feet and the width is 26½ feet and height 11½ feet. Above this terrace, the *vimāna* is situated. The *garbhagrā prakāra* is 40 feet in length and 13 feet in width on all sides<sup>20</sup>.

At the front door of the *Garbhagrā* are fixed eight bronze bells. A narrow *antarāla* connects the sanctum to the close of *ardhamandapa* in its front. It is 68 feet in length, 50 feet in width and its height is 16 feet. The *Ardhamandapā* otherwise

known as *sayanakuradu*, is covered with walls on all four sides and at the front wall, the entrance door is known as *manivayil* and has 44 bells fixed on the door.

There are stone pillars in six rows in the *Ardhamandapā* and the height of the pillar is 16 feet in length and 1 ½ feet in width. The pillars have a gap of 7½ feet between each other. There are four stone pillars, bearing a small *Mandapā* known as *Abhisheka* the *Mandapā* is on a 2 ¼ height platform. In the south western corner of the *ardhamandapā* a room is situated for washing the clothes of the deities. In the north western corner on a platform a stone statue of Senaimudalvar stands. Touching him on the eastern side there are twelve bronze statues of the twelve Alvars. In this *Ardhamandapā*, devotees stand and worship Kallarpiran. In the third row on the pillar touching the wall of the *garbhagrā* is a *yali* figure, 8½ feet in height. In this *yali* of 3 feet height a plantain flower shaped pillar and above it a 4 feet stoned plank are situated. In the third row, on all pillars is chiselled a 2 ¾ feet lotus on the base height of the pillar 6 ½ feet in height of square shape. A lion is seated at a height of 2 feet and above it is a 1 ½ feet stoned wooden plank of stones. This *Mahāmandapam* otherwise known as *Palkuradu* has no walls except on the northern side touching the Gopalan shrine. Gopalan stands with Bama and Rukmani. Garudalvar stands before it. At the southern side there are four steps to go up. Touching this the *Mahāmandapam* *Ardhamandapā* or *sayanakuradu* is situated at which *urchavar* Kallarpiran is in standing posture with his consort Sridevi. Booma devi, Vaikunthanayaki and Soranayaki and Sakarathalvar statue which are all in copper. All these are placed only in the month of *Chitrai*. On *Vaikuntaekadhasi* day the presiding deity Lord Kallarpiran is in reclining posture. Till then all these icons are placed before the main deity Vaikunthanathar in *garbhagrā*<sup>21</sup>.

The architectural features clearly show that they belong to the early Pandyā times and probably to the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Pandya rulers started construction of temples with stones<sup>22</sup>. Bricks were replaced by stone. The *Ardhamandapā* and *Mahāmandapā* pillars were changed and gigantic decorative pillars were installed during the times of the later Pandiyās and Madurai Nāyaks.

### **The Second *Prakara***

The second *prakara* is known as *Thalavarisai Prakara*. It is an open court yard, which runs around the *garbhagṛha*, *Arthamandapā* and *Mahāmandapā* and hence known as *Thalavarisai prakara*. To construct the temples exclusively with black stones, each stone was placed on top of each other. To fix both stones, the lower stone on its top was provided with a pit or hole and the stone to be placed had a peg. The portion of peg of the upper stone was fixed on the pit of the lower stone. Besides to have them jointed medicine was applied in between the two stones. It was called as *Astapantha Marunthu*<sup>23</sup>.

### **The Third *Prakara***

The third *prakara* is known as *Nachiar prakāra*. It is encircled by a wall on all sides constructed by Sundara Pandyā. This *prakāra* is also known as *Sevili Mandapā*. In 1282 A.D. during the seventh regnal year of the king Jatavarman Sundara Pandya (1276-1293) tax free land was granted in Pamarkkulam in Srivallanadu tiruppanipuram for the construction of Sundara Pandyan *thirumadil* by Tevarpiran Tadar<sup>24</sup>. In 1288 A.D. Jatavarman Sundara Pandya II also granted his personal tax free land in Nellur as Tiruppanipuram for the construction of Sundara-Pandyan *gopura* of five stories before the entry to the third *prakāra* by Tevarpiran Tadar<sup>25</sup>.

The Sundara Pandyan *gopurā* has five *kalasams*. After entering the Sundara Pandyā *gopurā* at a short distance to the south is the Lakshmi Narasimhar *sannathi*. The copper image of Urchavar and primary statue is of *Salagrāmam* with two of his spouses. A big mirror is fixed on its southern side. Close to it is situated (*Thirumadaipalli*) cooking room and grocery room<sup>26</sup>. At a short distance to the west of these rooms, Pagalpadthu *mandapā* is situated. *Adyya Yana* festival takes place there. In this festival, celebrated in the month of Margali, *prabhanda* is recited during day time so this is known as *Pagalpattu Utchavam*. This *Mandapā* is known as *Pagalpadthu Mandapa*<sup>27</sup>. This *Mandapā*, was constructed during the rule of Thirumalainayak of Madurai. To the west of it on the western extremity, the Vaikunthanayaki shrine is situated, and, close to it on the north the Boosathu *Mandapa* is situated. These are all on the southern side of this *prakāra*. An image of Vaikuntha Nayaki Thayar was set up by Thiruvārunga Perumal alias Pallavarayar<sup>28</sup>.

One Tevapiran Tadar, a Vaishnava leader of Srivaikuntam met Maravarman Kulasekara Pandya I (1268-1308), ruler of Madurai in 1304 A.D. He granted the land in Irrankulam in Srivallavallanadu, as *tiruppanippuram* for the construction of Kulasekaran *tirumandapā* before the entry to Sundara Pandyān *gopura* in Srikallarpiran temple by Tevapiran Tadar<sup>29</sup>.

In the northwestern extreme corner of the third *prakāra* the Soranayaki Thāyar shrine is situated. She is of *Salagram* stone. Before the Soranayaki Thayar shrine, *Adyyayana Mandapā* is situated. In front of it *Sorkavasal-Mandapa* and *Sivillimandapa* are situated. In front of *Sorkavasal-Mandapa* (ie. in the north eastern corner) Manavala Mamuni shrine is situated. South of this shrine Dasavathara *Mandapā* is situated.

## The Fourth *Prakara*

The fourth *prakāra* is *Nandavana prakāra* (flower garden). It is situated separately in the inside with the outer fifth *Prakara* touching the walls on the side in between the outer and inner walls. Within the inner wall is enclosed *Karuvarai*, *Arthamandapa*, *Maha-Mandapa*, *Sundara Pandyān gopurā*, facing east. There is a five storied tower in the middle of the inner walls. This is a very long and broad courtyard consisting of shrines, *Mandapās*, the *dhvajasthambā*, the altar and gardens, all giving a magnificent appearance.

In *Nandavana prakāra*, on the southeastern side of the western portion, the paddy granary and cattle shed *Mandapā* are situated. At the northern side of the north eastern corner a well is situated with a flower garden and west of it *Paramapātha Vāsal* and *Erapadthu Mandapā*. West of it, *Thalavirutcham Pavalamali* is planted. Srikallarpiran temple at Srivaikuntam has a *pavalamali* tree as *sthala-virutcham*<sup>30</sup>.

After crossing the *Rājagopurā*, on the western side, a big stone *Mandapa* is situated. This *Mandapā* is popularly called *Kulasekara Mandapā*<sup>31</sup>. In this *Mandapā*, *Alangāra Mandapā* or *Sayana Kuradu*, *Unjal mandapā* alias *Krishnan Kuradu*, Altar, flag staff, *Thiruvaimoli Mandapā* or *ThirukolaKuradu*, Hanuman shrine and *Vahana Mandapā*, *Thirumanjana Sapara* or *Thanga Masagiri* are located. On the southern side of this *Dhvajasthambā Mandapā*, the *Vasantha Mandapā* and *Kothandarāman* shrine are situated. Non consecrated *Kothandaraman Sannathi* was constructed by *Vada Maliyappā Pillai*, the Nayak Governor of the Tirunelveli region during the reign of *Thriumalai Nāyak* of *Madurai* (1623-1659).



## Outer Courtyard or Fifth *Prakara*

The entire outer courtyard is enclosed by a high boundary wall (*thirumāthil*) on all sides with only one opening which form the principal gateway to the temple (*Gopurā Vasal*) The principal gateway to this temple is the only one on the east. So, necessarily the principal deity and all the important structures like *dhvajasthambā*, Altar and main entrance are facing the east. The *Rājagopurā* has nine storeys with a total height of 110 feet. The entrance through it is 78 feet broad. It stands on a lofty plinth built of solid stone masonry, which forms a stable foundation for the superstructure built of brick and mortar. The superstructures are pyramidal in shape and rise to several storeys. The horizontal and vertical arrangements seem to be well balanced in the *Rājagopurā*. The inner part of the first two storeys are made up of wood with well carved sculptures and royal images installed there. The *Rājagopurā* is of 30 feet with black stones and above it are burnt brick and lime mortar<sup>32</sup>. At the top of the *Rājagopurā* there are nine *Kalasams* situated. Simhaladams are facing the four sides. A small entrance door with a height of 30 feet and 12 feet width is at the entrance to the temple (double doors). At the northern wooden door is situated a carpentary statue of Lord Vaikuntapathy in standing posture holding a mace. Fortunately, there are a number of inscriptions on the plinth portions of the *Rājagopurā* giving us clues as to its probable date. The earliest of them is dated 1529 A.D. and belongs to Visvanatha Nayak of Madurai. *Rājagopurā* and other walls were constructed by Visvanatha Nayak and Krishnappa Nayak (1564-1576 A.D.) of the 15<sup>th</sup> century A.D. to please the Vijayanagar ruler *Rāma Rāyer* (1542-1565 A.D.) who was the son-in-law of Krishna *Devarāyar* and his brother *Sadasivarāyar*, who was his name sake. Hence it is known that *Rāma Rāyer* was in power during this period<sup>33</sup>.

In the '24'<sup>th</sup> regnal year, on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1565, *Sadāsivadeva-Malarāya* of the Vijayanagar empire. Krishnappanayak, son of Visvanathanayak of Madurai, granted '250' *pon* for repairs in the Kallarpiran temple for the merit of Ramaraya. (1542-1565). This inscription is found at the eastern end of the northern wall of Sundara *Pāndyan* (inner)*gopurā*<sup>34</sup>.

The fifth *prakāra* represents the outer space of the temple. At the centre of it, the *Rāja Gopurā* is situated. Touching this *Gopura* on all the four sides, the compound wall is situated at a height of (30) thirty feet, of it (25) twenty five feet is of black stone and above it 5 feet is of burnt bricks. The width of the wall is one foot. The length of the wall on the northern and southern side is (580) five hundred and eighty feet respectively. The eastern and western walls lengths are 396 feet. At the eastern wall, at the centre, the *Rāja gopurā* is situated at a height of 78 feet.

At the north-eastern corner of the front wall (North to South wall) a *Garudālvār* statue in sitting posture, facing north is situated and in the south eastern corner also a similar statue is fixed on the top of the wall, bending the right foot forward and left foot backwards. In both *Garudās*, near them two *yali* statues are fixed, one facing east and another towards the south. In the north near the *Garudā* statue there is one *yali* facing north and another is facing east. The southern, wall touches the northern bund of the river Tambiraparani. The western wall is the same bund leading towards the north. The Northern wall connects west and east. The back wall of the temple had a wicket gate or small gate. Now it is near the bed of the Tambiraparani river<sup>35</sup>.

## Panthal Mandapa

The *Panthal Mandapā* is situated before the *Raja gopuram*. It is placed over 68 stone pillars with a length of 208 feet and width of 52 feet. This *Mandapā*'s height is 17 feet. This *Pandal mandapā* was constructed by Pillai Perumal<sup>36</sup>. On the top of it the sculpture of conch, discus, and *Thenkali Nāmam* are noticed. On the southern side is situated a *Manvala-Mamuni* sculpture doll in standing posture with two hands clasped in worshipping pose. A Hanuman sculpture is north of him in similar posture. At the Southern side is a conch, discus and *Namam* and there is a sculpture of Nammālvār in sitting posture with his left hand on his lap. His right hand is in showing or blessing pose in *Cinmuthirai*. Next to Nammalvar, Patchiraja in sitting posture with his hands clasped in worshipping posture is situated. At the centre of the *panthal Mandapam*, *Naduk Kuradu*, or *Ramyāna Kuradu* is situated. It is 11 ft. in length and 11ft. in width in square shape. In this stoned small *Mandapā* there are four steps each in front and on the rear side to reach the centre of this *Mandapā*, which stands on a platform of 2½ feet. This *Pandal mandapā*, Nadukkuradu was constructed by Ellarkum Nallan<sup>37</sup>. On the Northern side of the *Panthal Mandapa*, Gnanapiran *Sannathi* is situated, facing westwards. It is of square shape of (10) ten feet on all sides. He is in a room enclosed by walls on on all sides with a door on the western side. Ellarkum nallan built this *Sannathi*. North of this *Sannathi*, the temple office of the Executive Officer is situated<sup>38</sup>.

## Temple Car

The Temple cars are used as *Vāhana* or vehicle for Gods in festivals. No temple car procession is celebrated for various

reasons like non-availability of man power and electrical wires and poles obstructing the street.

The last such drawing and pulling the car by devotees on the ninth day festival in Chithirai Tamil month was in the year 1943. Due to the persistent efforts of the Tuticorin District Collector, Sri Rājā Rāman, and on his directions other government officials had taken necessary action to draw the temple car around the four car streets. In this Chithirai month the festival at Kallarpiran temple began on 22.4.03 and on 30.4.2003 the ninth day festival<sup>39</sup>. There is a *Mandapā* known as Theratru *Mandapa* situated at Mutharamman Kovil street at North West. The *Theradi Madan Kovil* is underneath this *Mandapa*. There is a grand wooden car provided by one Kasi Pillai alias Paramasivan Pillai of Kottaivellalar containing many art images carved on it<sup>40</sup>. This car relates to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its height is 20 feet, over the height of plinth. The car's length is 30 feet and it is 30 feet in width in square shape. The total height is 30 feet, the wheels are of 8 feet height and 8 ¼ feet is the width of the wheel. The axial length is 19 feet and is made up of 6 feet bars<sup>41</sup>.

### Temple Tank (*Theppakulam*)

The huge temple tank is situated on the north of the temple at a distance of 300 feet at Sakattukara street and is considered to be a sacred one. The term *Teppam* means float, a wooden plank on which the *urchavār* is placed and this raft goes around inside the tank which is full of water. At its centre is a *Nirali Mandapā*, the *Urchavar* is placed in it and *Pūjas* are offered. It is known as *Terrkkulam*<sup>42</sup> (Car tank) *Tirrukkulam*<sup>43</sup> (Holy tank) *Tirttakulam*<sup>44</sup> (Ablution tank) *Puskarni* (Water reservoir)<sup>45</sup> *Konard*<sup>46</sup> (Square tank) and *Sunai*<sup>47</sup> (spring). It is of 200 feet length and in width, of square shape. At the centre, the Nirali-

*mandapa* is of 15 feet height on a 3 feet height platform and contains four stone pillars one on each side. A *gopura* with a height of 8 feet is situated over the *Mandapā*. It is of open space. A *Kalasā* is fixed on the top of the *gopura*. On all four sides in this tank Padithurai is provided. Outside this tank is a *mandapā* of 45 feet length and of 30 feet width placed on a one feet height platform. The *mandapā* has 20 pillars (five Pillars on each side). The *mandapā* is encircled by walls on three sides and the east is open.

The eastern side (second and third pillar of the eastern row) has two Nāyak rulers images in worshipping pose. Before entry to the tank, the presiding deity is placed in this *mandapa*. Underneath this tank underground sluices are provided to supply water from the big tank. This tank is noted for its architectural value. *Thepporchavam* is celebrated in the Tamil month of *Thai*, for 10 days at night. Lord Kallarpīran reaches with his spouse at this tank, duly decorated with coloured lights and music. Chokkalingam built this (Theppakulam) Temple tank<sup>48</sup>.

It is said that once Indra was caught by Biramagathi Thosa. On the advice of Narathar he worshipped Vaikuntapathy and was relieved of it. Hence, a *vimāna* was constructed called Indira Vimān<sup>49</sup>. The ancient temple of Srikallarpīran temple was built more than 2000 years ago by the Pāndyā Yuvarāja<sup>50</sup>, the (Crown Prince) of Manappadai Veedu (near Pālayamkottai). Now Manappadai Veedu has lost its importance due to negligence. This ancient temple was sung about by Nammalvar, one of the twelve Ālvārs. The construction of the temple was completed during the eighth century A.D.<sup>51</sup>. This temple has a long history. The *gopuram* of this temple has a visible appearance and attracts all those who come to this town.

Due to various dynastic changes, this temple was built step by step by the various rulers of Tamil Nadu who were the Pandyās and Cholās, later the Pandyā and Nāyaks of Madurai. These rulers were donors who donated immense value of jewels, ornaments, precious stones, emeralds, wet lands, and kind to this temple. Even now, the ornaments are used to decorate the deity on important festivals.

*Garbhagrāhā Ardhamandapā, Mahāmandapā, Lakshmi Narasimar Shrine, VaikunthaNayakithayar shrine, SoraNāyaki thāyār shrine and Sivilimandapa, Sundara Pāndyan, Thirumathil, Sundarapāndyangopura and Kulasekara Pāndyanmandapā* were built during the time of the early and later Pāndyas. *PagalPadthu, Erapadthu-mandapa, Boosattumandapa., Sorgavasalmandapa, Gopura, Soranayaki Thayar mandapā, Thiruvoimoli mandapā, Krishnan Kuradu, SankanKuradu, hiruvengadamudayanmandapa and RājaGopura* were constructed during the time of the Nayaks. *Panthal mandapa, Ganapiran shrine VasanthaMandapa, KothanadaRāman Shrine, Thirumadaippalli granary and cattle mandapas* were constructed during the later period. *Ardhamandapā* and *manimandapam* were decorated by the later Pandyas and Nayak rulers.

Pillai Perumal Pillai constructed *Panthal-mandapā, Vasantha mandapā*, repaired the dilapidated wall, Car, (*Thiru Ther*) Temple Tank (Poikai Kulam) River *Mandapā, Thoppu Mandapa*. Besides the above, in his name a bronze bell of (1½) one and half feet height is hanging on the wooden frame, south of the inner side of *Rāja Gopurā* and was donated by Ratnavanki and lands at Seevalapari. Vadamalaiappapillai the officer of Madurai Nayak provided Dhasavathara and kasinivendan statues. Thiruvengkadamudayan *Mandapā, River Mandapā, Vasantha Mandapā*, and golden jewels of the parrot Pathaikkam and hakkara Pathaikkam were donated by him.

EllarkumNallan constructed the kitchen (*Thirumadai Palli*), paddy granary, Ganapiran shrine, Panthal *mandapā*, Nadukkuradu, compound walls, donated jewels and the Hanumar, Garuda, elephant-vahanams. Chokkalingam constructed *Āndāl-Sannathi*, Chakkara, a short temple car, Temple tank and *Thirumalai-poobalasamuthira Akrahara*<sup>52</sup> .

Twenty eight inscriptions were copied from this temple (3) three belonging to Chola and (18) eighteen inscriptions belonging to the later Pandya Kings<sup>53</sup> and three belonging to Vijayanagar. Of the twenty four are damaged *vatteluttu* of the eleventh century to the earliest record of land endowments for a perpetual lamp and for feeding of ten Brahmins by Adigalniradi alias Parakirama Muvendavelan. The Maha Sabha of Varaguna Mangalam made land free from taxes. This inscription is found on stones built on the eastern wall, inside the *Mahāmandapā* of the Kallarpiran temple<sup>54</sup>.

In 1198 A.D. the 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Kulottungā I, the *Māhasabhā* of Rajendra Chola Chathurvedi Mangalam sold the land to Karumanikkatalvar who was pleased to stand at Srivaikuntam<sup>55</sup>. In 1236 A.D. the 20<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Maravarman Sundara Pandya I (1215-1238) Monnaippiran Alagapperumal alias Udairvilappadarayar of PullurkudiPonparri in Naduvirkurru, in Milalikuram granted the *Achchu* for burning two *Sandhyā*lamps. Eight inscriptions of Jatavarman Kulasekharā II (AD.1239-58) Maravarman Kulasekhara I (1268-1312) and Sadiyavarma Virapandyā (1299-1343) one inscription of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya II (1276-1300 A.D), three inscription of Sadiyavarma Sundara Pandya III, two inscriptions of Vira Pandya (1422-1460), two inscriptions of SadasivaRāya (1543-65 were copied, and two uncopied inscriptions of Thirumalaināyak (1568-1578 A.D.) are also found in the Srikallarpiran temple.

Kumarasamy alias Umadurai, brother of Virapandyā Kattabomman, the Poligar of Panchalamkurichi, with his men attacked Srivaikuntam which was the only place left in the hands of the East India Company. Major Shepherd with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the third regiment with two canons left on 13.2.1801 for Srivaikuntam and reached there on 16.3.1801. He saw a small force on the opposite bank fighting with the Poligar forces and he boldly crossed the Poligars forces and reached the Srikallarpiran temple and took shelter inside the temple with his soldiers<sup>56</sup>. The Poligars left it. And so Major Shepherd returned to Palayamkottai, while the Poligars attacked his forces and caused much trouble to them. Thus, the Srivaikuntam Sri Kallarpiran temple served as a fort for the Company soldiers in the attack on 16.3.1801 known as Srivaikuntam Pagaoda.<sup>57</sup> Even today some imprints of bullets on the walls and gate can be seen<sup>58</sup>.

## References

- 1 Nellaiappa Iyer, M.V., *Srivai Arulmigu Kallarpiran Thirukovil Varalaru* (Tamil) Srivaikuntam, 1987, p.38.
- 2 A.R.E. 1959-60, No.372.
- 3 Thiruvai 9:2:4, 9:2:8, 9:10:5
- 4 Kannir – 4
- 5 M.V.Nellaipappa Iyer, *op.cit.*, p.38.
- 6 Subramaniya Pillai, E.M., *Nellai Mavatta Kovil Varalaru*, Madras, 1962, pp.195-196.
- 7 Padmaja Anandaraman, A., *Sri Nammalvar Vali Nava Tirupati*, Tirunelveli, 1994, pp.30-31.
- 8 Pate, H.R., *Tirunelveli District Gazetteer*, Vol – 1, Madras, 1947, p.431.



- 9 Subramaniyapillai, E.M., *op.cit.*, pp.191-200.
- 10 Rajagopalan, M., *Eraiyambargal Nadun Iniya Kovilgal* (Tamil), Madras, 1994, p.p. 225-226.
- 11 Pitchumani, S., *Thiruvaikunda Thalavaralaru, Thenthiruperai*, 2000, p.10.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p.8.
- 13 Padmaja Anandaraman, *op.cit.*, pp.20-21.
- 14 Senthil Selva Kumaran M. and Chandravanam, M., *Heritage of Chidambaranar District*, Tirunelveli, 1994, p.31.
- 15 *A.R.E.* 1959-1960, No.382.
- 16 Nellaiappa Iyer, M.V., *op.cit.*, p.46.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.8.
- 18 *Nalayira Thivya Prabandam*, 3571.
- 19 Sambandam, *Thirumular Thiruvirunthu*, 1995, Madras, p.224.
- 20 Field Study, 7th May 2010.
- 21 Raman, K.V., *op.cit.*, p.275.
- 22 Kothanta Raman, B., *Indiya Kalaikal*, Madras, 1987, pp.91-93.
- 23 *A.R.E.* 1959-60, No.381.
- 24 *A.R.E.* 1959-60, No.373 and Rajasekara Thagamani, M., Pandiyar Varalaru, Madras, 1969, p.485.
- 25 Nellaiappa Iyer, M.V., *op.cit.*, p.227.
- 26 Arunachala Kaundar, *Tamil Panpatil Vaishnavam Kovai*, 1968, p.175.
- 27 *A.R.E.* 1959-60 No.375.
- 28 *A.R.E.* 1959-60 No.380.
- 29 Thiruganam, S., *Thirukkovil Marankalin Maruthuva Payankal*, Tiruchi, 1995, p.18.

- 30 Periya Thiruvadi Pattachariyar U.V.A.V., *Sri Kallarpiran Swami Sannathi Sthlapuranam*, Srivaikuntam, 1969, p.24.
- 31 Rajagopalan, M., *op.cit.*, p.222.
- 32 Pitchumani, S., *op.cit.*, p.92.
- 33 A.R.I.E. 1961-62, No.344.
- 34 Personal observation, 11th June 2003.
- 35 Nellaiappa Iyer, M.V., *op.cit.*, p.35.
- 36 *Ibid.*
- 37 Raja Gopalan, M. *op.cit.*, p. 228.
- 38 *Thina Thanthi*, April, 2003. P.1-2.
- 39 *Ibid.*, p.226.
- 40 Raju Kalidoss, *Temple Cars of Medieval Tamilagam*, Madurai, 1989, p.286.
- 41 *Travancore Archaeological series part III*, Nos.132 and 134.
- 42 Descriptive Catalogue of Tamil Mss in the M.S.S. Library, Madras, No.2729, p.2578.
- 43 *Thirumalai Tirupati Devasthanam Epigraphical series* No.201.
- 44 South Indian inscriptions, Vol. I, No.43.
- 45 A.R.E. 1915, No.73.
- 46 I.P.S. No.12.
- 47 Raja Gopalan, M., *op.cit.*, p.228.
- 48 Pitchumani, S., *op.cit.*, p.3
- 49 Padmanabha Iyer, V.S., *A Short Account of Tirunelveli District*, Madras, 1933, p.43.
- 50 Nambiar, P.K., *The District Census Hand Book*, Tirunelveli, Vol.IX. Madras, 1965, p.430.

- 51 Nellaiappa Iyer, M.V. *op.cit.*, pp.24-25.
- 52 Raja Gopalan, M. *op.cit.*, p. 229.
- 53 A.R.E.1959-60 No.372.
- 54 A.R.E.1959-60, No.382.
- 55 A.R.E.1961-62, No.439.
- 56 Lord Edward Clive in Council, 21st March 1801, Letter, Military Consultations, Vol.280, pp.1681-1683.
- 57 Sundara Rajan, S., V.O. *Chidambaranar Mavattam Urum Palanchirapuram*, Tirunelveli, 1986, p.82.
- 58 Rajasekaran, *Thirukoil Tholilum Samudaya Uravugalum*, Madras, 1994, p.69.

# TĀNTRIC CULT OF TIRUVATTARU: A STUDY

R. EZHILRAMAN

*Ph.D, Research Scholar, Dept. of History,  
Pondicherry University, Pondicherry*

## Introduction

Since very early times, the popular belief systems, magical rites and rituals found their way into the *Saiva* and *Sakta* sectarian philosophy. The original classification of Saivism was into three schools: Vedic, *tāntric* and Misra. In course of time, *tāntric* ideology was affected by all of them in various degrees. The *Vāmācāra* and *Dakshinācāra* are the two classifications of *tāntric* sects; both of them speak about the Brahminical interpolation. In spite of all such mishandling, grafting and the burden of interpolations, *tāntra* could retain its basic structure and meaning in clearly rejecting the caste system and patriarchy and in the field of religion all external formalities with regard to spiritual quest<sup>1</sup>. In this paper, the tantric sculptures of South India are analysed with a specific study of the tantric sculptures of Ādikesava Perumal Temple of Tiruvattaru, Kanyakumari.

## Ādikesava Perumal Temple, Tiruvattaru

The Ādikesava Perumal Temple is situated in the middle of the Tiruvattaru region, a head-quarter of the *panchayat* union of Kalkulam *taluk* of Kanyakumari District, Tamil Nadu. Geographically, Tiruvattaru is located about 30 kms from Nagercoil

off Mārthandam near the Kerala - Tamil Nadu border. This temple is one of the 13 *Malai Nātu Divya Dēsams*, a sacred place for Vaishnavas dedicated to Ādikesava Perumal. This is one of the oldest temples in this region, which underwent architectural expansion under the reign of the Cholas, and subsequently enlarged under the Kings of the Waynad and Trividankur. References about Thiruvattaru are also found in the Sangam Tamil literature called “*Puranānūru*” by Mankudikolar in verse 396 as ‘*Valanir Vattaru*’. It also refers to Tiruvattar as the seat of Eliniadan, famous for his patronage of men of letters. Though it is said that this temple was in existence for more than 1100 years, the inscriptions found here merely belong to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Besides, Nam-Ālvār, one of the twelve Vaishnavite saints describes this as ‘*Valamikka Vattarai*’ and he has sung 11 verses praising Ādi Kesavan of Thiruvattaru. Besides, Aditya Varma, one of the Kings of Travancore had composed ten verses in Sanskrit called ‘*Avathara Dasakam*’ in praise of this temple deity; and Sri Krishna Chaithanya of Bengal visited here and wrote ‘*Sri Brahma Samhita*’, an outstanding document on Hindu Philosophy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century<sup>2</sup>. Though this temple is located in Tamil Nadu, the temple towers were built in typical Kerala style on a 3 acre land and all oblations (*pūjas*) are in the *tāntric* form of Kerala style called *Tāntrika Vithi* and the priests who got appointed here were also from Kerala. The *pūjas* are done according to Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple of Thiruvananthapuram. An important festival celebrated in this temple is *Vaikunta Ekadesi*. The delicious food (*prasādam*) offered here are *Pāl Pāyasam* (milk kheer), *Aval*, and *Appam*.

Tradition says that at Thiruvattaru, Ādisesha, the Commander of Lord Vishnu encircled the *Asura* named *Kesa* in his gigantic coils and formed a bed for his Lord. This incident led to the naming of the Lord, Ādikesava<sup>3</sup>. However, this village is surrounded

and circled by the River Parali on all sides. Hence, this place came to be called Thiru ‘*Vatta-āru*’<sup>4</sup>. Besides, the river starts to flow from the Northern side and passes through East, West and Southern directions around the village, Tiruvattaru. In Tamil, *vattam* means circle. Tiruvattaru derives its name as it is situated on the banks of a river which encircles the town on three sides. The Battle of Colochel was associated with the Tiruvattaru temple. It is said in Devaswom accounts of the Tiruvattaru temple that during the war between the Venad (Waynad) King and the Dutch army that took place at Colochel in 1741, the King Marthandavarma proceeded to the Royal shrine of Tiruvattaru on 10, June, 1741 with his family. There by worshipping and invoking the God against the Dutch, he got victory in the battle and thus the battle of Colochel resulted in disaster for the Dutch in that area<sup>5</sup>.

## The Temple Architecture

The temple architecture is in the Kerala style with wooden pillars, doors and roofs<sup>6</sup>. One has to climb 18 steps to enter and reach the main temple. The principal deity called Ādikesava Perumal is 22 feet long, made out of 16008 *Sāligrama* stones facing West in the *sanctum sanctorum* of the temple. The Lord is lying on his snake couch (*Bhujanga Sayanam*)<sup>7</sup> and has to be viewed through three doors. He is lying in the opposite direction with his head towards in the South and his feet facing North. There is an idol of Lord Siva near to Lord Ādikesava Perumal inside the *sanctum* along with the latter’s consorts Sridevi and Bhūdevi on his either side. The *sanctum* is surrounded by four outer *prakāras*. The life-like sculptures like *Oorthuva Thāndavam*, Nataraja, Vishnu, Shakti, Venugopala, Rathi, Manmatha, Lakshmana and Indrajit are excellently carved in the *Balipeeta mandapa*.

The temple is also renowned for its mural paintings, probably belonging to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, found on the walls of the inner shrine.

The *Vimānā* of this temple is called *Ashtākshara vimānā* which is small in size. There is a single pillar hall (*Otraikkal Mandapam*) made of single stone, which was erected by the Travancore King-Vira Ravi Varma about 1603-1607. It is another remarkable feature that the *mandapa* located outside the *sanctum*, measuring about 18 ft in width and 3 ft in height has been built on a single stone in the 12th Century A. D. These life-like images are in Tamilnadu style, whereas the *Ottakal mandapa* and the *Udayamarthanda mandapa* which contains some five pieces of wooden carvings are of Kerala type<sup>8</sup>. A unique occurrence that happens in between the 3rd and 9th day of the Tamil month *Puratāsi* and *Panguni* is that during dusk, the Sun's rays directly falls on the Lord inside the *sanctum*, almost as a mark of respect from the Sun God to Ādikesava Perumal.

## Inscriptions and Sculptures

There are nearly 50 inscriptions found outside the inner *prakāra* in both Tamil and Sanskrit including those of Kulottunga Chola I. In addition to the inscriptions, there are a number of stunning sculptures on the pillars that are similar to the pillars of Krishnapuram and Sri-Vaikuntam temples of the same district. Very rare and unique sculptures are found in the *Sri-Bali mandapa* or *Balipeeta mandapa* which is 13.15 meters in length and 12.40 meters in breadth; and in the *Nālabalam* (hall facing four sides) which is 42.50 meters in length and 36.50 meters in breadth<sup>9</sup>.

The first inner *prakāra* of the temple is a square double pillared hall of 80 meters and the gap between the pillars is 6.10 meters. On the pillars of the inner *prakāra*, the sculptures of *Deepalakshmis* (female lamp bearers) are found on 224 pillars but none resembles the other<sup>10</sup>. The Tāntric sculptures under study are part of more than 2300 sculptures located on the pillars of the outer *prakāra* wall and on the pillars of the small *mandapas* around the *sanctum sanctorum*. These sculptures depict different ascetics in yogic postures, various stories of *purānas*, *ithihāsas*, and folk tales, practice of *Bhairavi cakra*, *Kundalini yoga*, *Varaha Natha*, *Astavakara*, *Purushamriga*, *Lajja Gauri*, sculptures denoting various cultural practices like dance music, occupations, various minor deities, and so on<sup>11</sup>. Except for a few of the traditional *Siddhā Kshētras* like Srisailam of Andhra Pradesh where rare tantric sculptures are found in the outer *prakāra* of Sri Mallikarjuna temple, most of the sculptures that are found in the Tiruvattaru Adikesava Perumal temple are also almost unique in the sense that they are nowhere found elsewhere in South India.

## The Tantra

*Tantra* literally means thread or threads in a loom or web which, metaphorically, denotes the guideline through the labyrinth of *samsāra* towards liberation. It is a Sanskrit word meaning rule, regulation, system or administrative code<sup>12</sup>. It arose as the sum total of human knowledge of the world and a way of life that sought the significance of knowledge in the daily activities of men, such as agriculture, cattle breeding, iron melting, alchemy, medicine, embryology, and so on. In this the microcosm that is found within the human body is identical to the macrocosm that exists in the outside world<sup>13</sup>. Many schools of thought claim



to hold that the *Tantras* existed during the period as old as that of the Vedas. However, these *Tantras* are textual sources or *agamas* of *Tāntrism* which started appearing around the seventh century A.D., but the exact origin of *Tantra* seems to be lost in antiquity. In other words, they seem to have originated in the conception of the Creator of God through the aspect of motherhood<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, *Tantra* in general, is believed to be a *Shāstra* which deals with *Pūja* of Shiva Shakti and others. It is a *Sādhana*, a method, a technique or a path and is available in all religions. One may have faith in any religion. One can practice or do *Sādhana* as it does not deal with religion or faith. It is a regulated path to bring God, the deities and others under one's control through worship and prayer as it contains various methods of *Sādhana* and use of materials in specified forms, under set rules and directions<sup>15</sup>.

The chief focus of tantric ritual is on the attainment of a physically strong body (*Siddhadeha* or *Kāya*) through various yogic practices. *Pranāyama* (controlled breathing) is one such yogic exercise. Through several forms of the *Pranāyama*, the innate energy in the human body identified as female energy, is aroused to meet the male energy in the *Sahasarara* at the centre of the head. Of the two aspects of *Tāntrism* namely, the sophisticated and the popular, the latter incorporates a number of non-Brahmanical Hindu elements – one of which is the concept of Sakti. Sakti resides in the human body as the serpent power (*kundalini*) within *mūladhāra cakra*. The dormant female energy is awakened by yogic exercises and then she is to be taken up through the regions of five other *cakras* to the realm of *sahasarara*<sup>16</sup>. If an *sādhaka* gets success in this nearly impossible endeavour, he attains salvation or becomes *Jivan Mukta*. The term *mantra* includes two powers such as, the *vācaka* and *vācyā*. The word *vācaka* embodies words as well

as sounds. There are two grades of sound and these are called *bindu* and *nada*. *Bindu* is Siva; *bija* is Sakti, while the term *nada* combines Siva and Sakti. Siva is recognized as the male principle and Sakti denotes the female principle; and through their union (*kāma-kala*) proceeds to creation (*sāsti*). Siva is passive, Sakti is active and without Sakti, Siva is rendered into *Sava* (corpse)<sup>17</sup>.

As enunciated above, *tāntric* philosophy and methods were absorbed by all the religious systems of ancient India. Being the amalgamation of native simple belief systems and practices, *tāntric* religion took into its fold the masses of the country, besides the elite and the affluent. In course of time, *tantra* got classified into two major currents – the sophisticated and the popular<sup>18</sup>, of which the former contained many Brahminical Hindu elements, which were the interpolations of the post-Gupta Brahminical dominance. The latter, however, retained its original popular form and content, in theory and practice. Hence, *Tāntrism* is a school of spiritual teachings and practices, stressing the necessity of involving all the components and vibrant forces of the human personality. It includes the emotions and bodily functions, in the process of spiritual endeavour. *Tāntric* practices also recognize its interrelatedness with the cosmic forces in order to achieve final integration, by which the practitioners attain the goal of ultimate liberation. Often, the *Tāntric* sources claim that *Tāntrism* represents the school of thought and practice, both ritual and spiritual<sup>19</sup>.

### *Bhairavi Cakra*

According to *Mahānirvanatantra*, the God Sankara declared five *tattvas* such as wine, flesh, fish, *mudra* (cereals or gestures) and sexual intercourse generally known as five Ms or *Panēa-*

*mākaras* (*Madya*, *Māmsa*, *Matsya*, *Mudra* and *Maithuna*) as basic for *tantra sādhana*. Of the three types of human beings, only the '*vīra*' type is allowed to use the *Panēa-mākaras* or '*kaula dravyas*' in the tantric rituals<sup>20</sup>. The woman with whom sexual intercourse is to be had is called *Sakti* or *Prakṛti* or *Lata* and this special ritual is called *Latasādhana*. According to *Kaulavalinirṇaya*, sexual intercourse is the only means by which the aspirant can become a Siddha. Every woman is fit for intercourse, except the wife of the Guru or of one who has attained the status of *vīra*. The most significant Tāntric sex rite is *cakrapūja*, i.e. worship in a circle. According to a description of it found in the *Kaulavalinirṇaya*, an equal number of men and women, without distinction of caste and even of blood-relation secretly meet at night and sit in a circle. The goddess is represented by a *yantra* or diagram. The woman cast their bodices in a receptacle and each of the assembled men finds a female companion for that night by taking a bodice out to those contained in the receptacle.<sup>21</sup> This Bhairavi *Cakra* is scrupulously kept secret in all the *Tantras*<sup>22</sup>.

In *Bhairavi Cakra*, there is no distinction of caste, and there is no restriction about one eating the remnants of others' meals. The worshippers joining the *cakras* are considered as part and parcel of the Great Mother Goddess. The significance of these *cakras* is that the female agents referred to should be worshipped as the Mother Goddess by the devotee by remaining unaffected by passions and temptations. The meat of birds or beasts represents the sacrifice of attachment and animalistic nature.<sup>23</sup> This *cakrapūja* is also known as *yonipūja*, mostly performed by the *kāyasiddhas*<sup>24</sup>, who belong to the *Vāmācāra* group<sup>25</sup>. The Kapalika sect is the best known tantrika sect which freely indulged in the usage of the *panēa mākara*. The sexual

depictions which appear in large number in both Saiva and Vaishnava temples speak volumes about the popularity of sexual rituals during medieval times<sup>26</sup>.



**Fig 1. Bhairavi Cakra**

In the sculpture (Fig.1), the tantric practitioner is standing in *anjali mudra* whose hands are raised above his head. His hair is matted. His legs are just bent towards the right side. He is shown ithyphallic or with a virile membrane. Usually a group of practitioners are depicted along with a sculpture of a nude woman who represents the *Bhairavi* or female *shakti*. Here, the female called a Bhairavi in the sexual rites. She is shown standing before the practitioner in the nude with legs wide apart or displaying her secret parts. Surrounding her on either side are three male *tantric* practitioners similarly nude with virile membranes in *Anjali mudra*. Similar type of sculptures that depict a group of tantric practitioners of *Bhairava Cakra* are frequently found in almost all Siva temples of South India, especially Tamil Nadu<sup>27</sup>, Andhra Pradesh<sup>28</sup>, Karnataka<sup>29</sup>, Kerala<sup>30</sup> and Puducherry<sup>31</sup>.

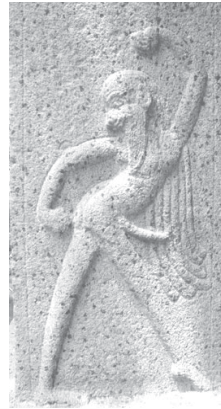
## ***Kundalini* Yoga**

*Kundalini* is the energy in the form of a coiled serpent remaining latent in the *mūladhāra*. As the source of all energy, *Kundalini* reveals itself when roused by yogic exercise. This ancient belief is at the root of the concept of *Kāyasādhana*, so much emphasised in the *Sakta* and the Buddhist Tantras. According to the *Sakta* scheme, there are six nerve-plexes or wheels (*satcakras*) within the human body<sup>32</sup> and these are in the *mūladhāra* (rectal region, at the base of the spine), *svadhisthāna* (immediately above the sexual organs), *manipura* (the region of the navel), *anahata* (region around the heart), *visuddha* (at the front of the throat), and *ājna* <sup>33</sup> (between the eyebrows). The highest cerebral region is known as *sahasrara*<sup>34</sup>. Through yogic exercise this *Kundalini Sakti* has to be pushed up through the two main nerves, *ida* and *pingala*, so that it may reach the *sahasrara* or the highest cerebral region where it should meet its source. In the *Kaula* sexual practice, the *Kundalini shakti* is visualised in the form of the release of the semen. The release of the semen is to be withheld and the energy is to be sent in the reverse direction to the *sahasrara padma* which is turned inwards. Through yoga *sādhana*, the semen has to be turned upwards and energy of the semen is to be retained in the *sahasrara* which is the zenith of the union of the *purusa* and *prakriti*. This reverse process of the *Kundalini* yoga is the peculiarity of the *kaula* school.

In a sculpture, along with a practitioner, a snake is depicted moving upward. It denotes that the yogi is in practice of *Kundalini* yoga. Besides, above his head, a four petalled lotus is depicted which probably is denoting that he is in the initial stage of practising *Kundalini* from *mūladhāra* (which is represented by a four

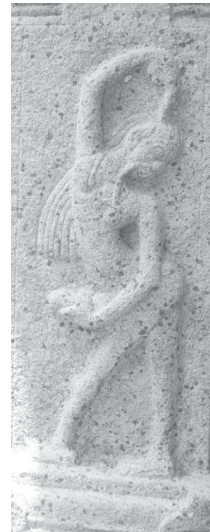


**Fig 2.** *Raising of Kundalini*



**Fig 3.** *Indicating Muladhara*

petalled lotus and the upward movement of the snake indicates the raising of *Kundalini Sakti*; (Fig.2). In another sculpture, a yogi is standing in *Pārśvōttānāsana*<sup>35</sup> and showing his right hand index finger near his buttocks (probably where the *mūladhāra cakra*, the starting point of *Kundalini Sakti* is; Fig.3) and the left hand index finger showing his head and in another sculpture, the yogi holding his male organ (penis) in his right hand and his left hand finger showing his head, where the *sahasrara* is (Fig.4), This may indicate that his *Kundalini sakti* has reached his *sahasrara* from *mūladhāra*. Apart from these, more than hundreds of similar sculptures are found in the first inner *prakāra* of the Tiruvattaru temple with slight architectural changes in the yogic postures.



**Fig 4.** *Indicating Shasrara*

## Cult of Mother Goddess



**Fig 5.** The Mother Goddess

The cult of Mother Goddess (Lajja Gauri) was very popular in entire south India. It is still being worshipped by those who want to beget children. The genital organ of the sculpture is depicted prominently with her legs apart. The genital organ is now worshipped by propitiating it with vermilion paste<sup>36</sup>. This sculpture is mostly depicted as she is in sitting posture with her genital organ visible prominently (Fig.5). The image and presentation of this Mother Goddess is full of symbolic meanings. Her *Yoni* is a symbol of feminine power of sex, and of creation. Following the latter set of meanings, *yonis* became the goddess of birth or re-incarnation. The *yonis* symbolized the Goddess and her own procreative energy, source of origin of everything, and also as the manifestation of Devi. It is said to be the abode of the Goddess and all deities, symbol of all sacred power, and has been equated with the sacred *tirthas*<sup>37</sup>. There are several instances of *yonis* worship in different parts of the world. The oozing of *yonis* represents a sexually aroused active female organ. The *yonis*-circle is supplied 'nectar' daily, it is easy to infer

symbolically that the fluid oozing out of the *yoni* is nothing but the 'nectar' and that is why the *yoni* remains wet ever. Besides, it could be also be explained as a symbol of menstruating. as it is popularly understood to be representing the female's fertility. Since female fertility is regarded as equally sacred by the cultivators concerned with the Earth's fertility, this wet-*yoni* symbol fits well in the local cultural context<sup>38</sup>.

The female fertility figures (Mother Goddess) are classified into three groups (1) The Universal Mother or Isis type (2) The Divine Woman or Ishtar type and (3) The Personified *Yoni*. The Universal Mother is represented in three ways: - (a) with full breasts, often exaggerated in size or number. (b) With a child in her arms, either being suckled or held up to her face and, (c) as a pregnant woman. In these figures, the child is an essential part, actual or implied. The Divine Woman is always that of a young woman, hardly more than a girl, and the rounded limbs are made as beautiful as the skill of the sculptor permits. She is sometimes nude, sometimes lightly clad and sometimes completely clothed. So such figures should not be called a 'Mother Goddess,' for she has not yet borne a child. It represents "the divine woman whom man desires - beautiful, exquisite, alluring, potential mother but still a virgin". The figure of personified *yoni* is commonly represented as seated on the ground, the legs spread out so as to display the pudenda, which are strongly marked and often exaggerated in size. In some cases, the figure is squatting with the knees raised and turned outward. In every case, the outward spread of the thighs is essential. The pose of the arms is varied; sometimes they are raised in the so-called 'attitude of prayer,' sometimes they are held forward as in invitation, sometimes the hands are laid on the thighs to stretch the legs apart to emphasize the pudenda<sup>39</sup>. Though this cult of Mother Goddess or Lajja Gauri is very ancient<sup>40</sup>, most



of these sculptures were engraved in the temples during the Vijayanagara or Nayaka periods in different parts of South India.

## Varaha Natha

Nathism originated among persons belonging to the lower sections of the society. The *Natha Siddhas* had a general predilection toward occult practices and acquisition of supernatural powers. They believe in the divine power of the Guru or preceptor who initiates the disciple according to his receptivity<sup>41</sup>. The *Nava Natha* cult of South India which becomes the most popular sectarian faith of the *tantric* group during the 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> centuries seems to be the amalgamation of the Saiva, Sakta, Vajrayana and Sahajayana schools of philosophy and by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the narrow sectarian differences between these religious sects disappear and the codified system of all these get fully developed in the *Natha Siddha* cult. The *Natha* cult is believed to have been founded and developed by nine *Nathas* and eighty four *Siddhas*. *AdiNatha* is believed to be an incarnation of Siva. The followers of the cult are, therefore, called the *Nathapanthis*. The most important feature of this cult is the belief in attaining supernatural powers through yogic practices<sup>42</sup>.

In many of the pillars of the Tiruvattaru temple, a *Natha* is depicted along with a boar, may be a *Varaha Natha*.<sup>43</sup> He is in *Anjali mudra* standing with his left leg and his right leg folded above the left knee like *Vrksāsana*.<sup>44</sup> He is wearing a garland of beads on his chest and a small piece of cloth (*langutta*) under his waist hiding his male organs.<sup>45</sup> His hair is left free hanging downwards. The exact name of this *Natha* is not known. However, in many temples of southern Tamil Nadu belonging to the medieval period, a *yogi* in *anjali mudra* or in meditative

posture is depicted along with a pig behind his leg<sup>46</sup>. (See fig. 6). In this temple itself, on the pillars of the inner *prakara*, more than twenty such sculptures of *Varaha Natha*, standing in *Anjali Mudra* are found.

### Yogic Postures

*Yoga Sādhana* is one of the basic practice in *Tāntric* cult and may be a place for yogic practices during medieval times as attested by the these sculptural representations. Through the *yoga Sādhana*, the human body is to be made strong and thus the mental plane is also strengthened. This will ultimately give the *Sādhaka*, the needed physical and mental pre-requisite for the attainment of *Kāya Siddhi*. The yogi is depicted in seated posture and his knees are tied with *yogapatta* with crossed legs that nest on the ground (or on the mountain rocks). He has a long beard and his hair is matted. His eyes are closed, denoting that he is in deep meditation. His hands rest down on his knees. On his two arms and wrist, he is wearing bangle like rings (Fig.7). Some of them have a long beard and their hair is matted. Some of them are depicted

in deep meditation. They are wearing bangle like rings and a garland of beads like *rudrakshamāla* in their necks. They are carrying *yogadanda* in their hands and *kamandalu* with them. Some of the ascetics are depicted in *anjali mudra* and in *Dwi*



**Fig 6.** *Varaha Natha*



**Fig 7.**

*Yogi in Meditation*



**Fig 8.**  
*Practicing Yogasana*



**Fig 9.** *Practicing Yogasana*

*Pāda Sirsāsana*<sup>47</sup> (Fig.8), some of them are naked as their secret parts are visible, one of them carrying a *linga* in one hand and holding his male organ in other hand and so on. In one of the sculptures, a *yogi* is depicted as he is meditating in a tremendous way as his head rests on the ground and his legs are folded upwards (*ūrdva Padmāsana* in *Sirsāsana*)<sup>48</sup> (Fig.9).

In many of the sculptures, above the head of the yogic practitioners or Siddhas, an *astadala padma* is engraved. The eight petalled lotus (*astadala padma*) is used as an universal tantric symbol. The petals are said to be *Ka, Ca, Ta, Ta, Pa, Ya, Sa, and La*, which is known as *guptarayogini* and, the attainment is known as *mahimasiddhi*<sup>49</sup>. Similarly, numerous sculptures of *yogis* with different *yogic* postures are found in the inner *prakāra* pillars of the Tiruvattaru temple which are more interesting. Apart from this, almost in every temple of South India, sculptures of various *yogic* postures are frequently found.

## Conclusion

Thus, the existence and antiquity of the *Tāntric* cult as well the cult of *Nathas* and *Siddhas* in the southern corner of South India, is revealed by the sculptural art of the Tiruvattaru Adikesava Perumal Temple. This *Tāntric* religion seems to be a very old one that included almost all religious faiths in it. Though its origin is not authentically dated, during medieval times this cult was popular and became prominent, which is revealed by the existing art representations of the *Tāntric* sculptures found in the temples of various periods. Similarly, the antiquity of the village *Tiruvattaru* can be pushed back to the *Sangam* Age as it is mentioned in the *Sangam* text *Puranānūru* (see note 10 below). It is also identified on the basis of available textual descriptions that indicate the wide popularity of the *Tāntric* cult throughout South India.

## References

- 1 Chandramouli, N., ‘Siddha Cult in South India : Representations In Art and their Ramifications’, (Paper presented in the International Seminar on ‘World Religions after September 11th: An Asian Perspective’ Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 17-19, January, 2009).
- 2 Gopalakrishnan, M., (Ed.), *Gazetteers of India, Tamil Nadu State, Kanyakumari District*, Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras, 1995, pp. 1217-18.
- 3 The presiding deity of Tiruvattaru is a Sayanamurthi stretched out on his commodious serpent bed. For more details see S.Padmanaban, “Temples in Kanyakumari District”, in S.V. Subramanian and G. Rajendran (eds.), *Heritage of the*

*Tamil Temple Arts*, International Trust of Tamil Studies, Madras, 1985, p. 428.

- 4 Gopalakrishnan, M., (Ed.), *Op.cit.* p. 1217.
- 5 See Padmanaban, S., *Op.cit.* p. 425.
- 6 The temple is older than Anantha Padmanabha Swamy temple in Thiruvananthapuram (about 50 kms from here). Ādikesava Perumal is said to be the elder brother of Anantha Padmanabhan and hence, this place is referred to as Ādi nanthapuram. This temple is also known as Ādi Dhamasthalam, Dakshina Vaikundam, Srirangam of Chēra Nādu and Parasurama Sthalam.
- 7 This *Māru Sayanam* of the Lord sleeping from right to left is also seen in Tiruvekka in Kanchipuram.
- 8 Thus, the temple of Tiruvattaru may be regarded as a fusion of Tamil Nadu and Kerala types of art and architecture. See S. Padmanaban, *Op.cit.* p. 430.
- 9 For a detailed study of this temple, see A.K.Perumal, *Adikesava Perumal Alayam Tiruvattaru Koil Varalaru* (Tamil), Tamilini, Chennai, 2007.
- 10 Pamphlets issued by the Temple Trust, Tiruvattaru.
11. Ezhilraman,R., ‘Tantric Art of South India: A Study of the Sculptures of Adikesava Perumal Temple of Tiruvattaru, Kanyakumari’, Paper presented to the 30th Session of the South Indian History Congress, 6-8th February 2010, Kannur, Kerala.
- 12 Pranab Bandyopadhyay, *The Goddess of Tantra*, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, 1990, p. 1.
- 13 Bhattacharyya, N.N., *History of Tantric Religion*, Manohar Publishers, Delhi, 1982, p.1.
- 14 Pranab Bandyopadhyay, *Op.cit.*, p. 1.
- 15 Chawdhri, L.R., *Secrets of Yantra, Mantra and Tantra*, New Dawn Press, INC., New Delhi, 1992, p. 121

- 16 By the yogic control of breath, the thirty knots in the spinal cord can be loosened, as a result of which the two vital winds, *prāna* and *apana*, can enter the spinal cord and move upwards as *hamsa* through the six nerve plexuses – *mūladhāra*, *svadhisthāna*, *manipuraka*, *anahata*, *visuddha* and *ājna* – and on reaching the *Sahasrara* region, assume the nature of *sūnya*. There are 7200 nerves within the body of which sixty-four can be distinctly located and fifteen utilized for yogic purposes. For more details see T. N. Misra, *Impact of Tantra on Religion and Art*, D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., New Delhi, 1997, p. 95.
- 17 Misra, T.N., *Op.cit.*, p. 19.
- 18 *Ibid.* pp. 5-7.
- 19 Ezhilraman, R., Tantric Sculptures in Bahur Sri Moolanatha Swamy Temple: A Study, Paper Presented at the Sixteenth Annual Session of the Tamil Nadu History Congress, Trichy, 9th – 11th October, 2009.
- 20 The *Tantras* speak of three temperaments, dispositions, characters (*bhava*), or classes of men, namely, the *pashu-bhava* (animal), *vīra-bhava* (heroic), and *divya-bhava* (*deva*-like or divine). These divisions are based on various modifications of the *guna* as they manifest in man (*jiva*); see Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) (Trans), *Mahanirvana Tantra - Tantra of the Great Liberation*, p. 25.
- 21 Bhattacharyya, N.N., *Op.cit.*, pp. 121-122
- 22 For more information about this practice see Pranab Bandyopadhyay, *op.cit.*, pp. 135-36; and also, G. W. Briggs, *Gorakhnath and the Kanphata Yogis*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, Delhi, 1938, pp. 172-73
- 23 Pranab Bandyopadhyay, *Op.cit.*, p. 136
- 24 Venkataraman, R., *Op.cit.* pp. 94-96; he classifies the Tamil *Siddhas* into *Sanmargasiddhas*, *Nanasiddhas* and

*Kayasiddhas*. Further, he also gives more descriptions on performing of *Vānipuja* (*yonipuja*) as described by Siddha Romarishi.

- 25 The *Siddhas* are classified into two broad categories such as *Daksina* (right hand) and *Vama* (left hand). It is generally held that those who participate in the rituals of five Ms belong to the category of *Vāmācāra*. According to a different tradition, everyone is a follower of *Daksinacara* by birth. It is only by initiation that one becomes a *Vamacari*. The followers of *Daksinacara* worship the great goddess in the traditional way. They believe in *varnasrama* and in the existing *Brahmanical* methods. See N. N. Bhattacharyya, *Op.cit.*, pp. 401 and 421.
- 26 In Srisailam, there is found some similar sexual depictions that denote this yoga *sadhana* of *kundalini*. This is rare compared to any other medieval temple of both *Saiva* and *Vaishanava* sects in Andhra Pradesh.
- 27 Similar depictions of *Bhairavicakra* is found in various *Saiva* and *Vaishnava* temples of Tamil Nadu such as Sri Ranganatha Swamy Temple and Ucchi Pillaiyar Temple etc. in Trichy, Chidambaram Nataraja Temple, Virutha Girisvara Temple Vridhachalam and also various other important famous medieval temples of Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Coimbatore, Dindigul, Villupuram etc. (districts of Tamil Nadu).
- 28 The depiction of *Bhairavicakra* worship in the *prakāra* wall of Srisailam Malikarjuna temple is one of the best examples in such realistic manner in entire south India. Besides, a few similar sculptures are also found in the Narasimha temple at Lower Ahobilam, and Siva temple at Mahanandi etc.
- 29 In Karnataka, in most of the Saivite temples one can find the sculptures representing the *Bhairavi Cakra*, for instance, in Somesvara Temple, Halsoor, Yoga Nandeessvara temple,

Nandi, Siva temple at Avani, Bhairava temple at Nanjungudu etc.

- 30 Though being at present a Vaishnavite temple, sculptures relating to the *Bhairavicaakra* are found in the pillars and in the pillared halls of Aramulla, Tiruvananthapuram, Tirumoozhikalam, Tiruvandoor, Tirumoozhikalam, Tirukadithanam, etc. (temples in Kerala).
- 31 In Tirukamesvara Temple of Villianur, Puducherry, more than twenty such panels representing the *Bhairavi Cakra* are depicted and an inscription without the depiction of *Bhairavi* or the female performer is also found on one of the pillars of Bahur Sri Moolanatha Swamy temple.
- 32 Bhattacharyya, N. N., *op.cit.*, pp. 226-227; Except *sahasrara*, the other six are called *cakras* (circles) and these seven are represented with lotuses having 4, 6, 10, 12, 16, 2 to 1000 petals from *Muladhara* to *Sahasrara* respectively. Each lotus was assigned a colour, a *bija* mantra and a presiding deity with his consort. See N.N. Bhattacharyya, *passim*; For more details about the *satcakras* see S.C. Banerji, *A Brief History of Tantra Literature*, Naya Prokash, Calcutta, 1988, p.14; and also see R.Venkataraman, *op.cit.*, Appendix-17, p. 233.
- 33 *Ajna cakra* has two large petals, each divided into forty-eight smaller petals, giving ninety-six in all. See Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov, *Man's Subtle Bodies and Centres: the Aura, the Solar Plexus, the Chakras...*, Prosveta, France, 1997, p.134.
- 34 Generally 1000 petalled lotus, but it has 960 outer petals and a central corolla of twelve petals, which gives 972 petals in all. The twelve petals of the corolla are golden yellow and the outer ring of 960 petals is purple, and the two rings spin in opposite directions. See Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov, *Op.cit.*, pp. 134-135.



- 35 *Pārūva* means side or flank. *Uttāna* (*ut*=intense, and *tān*=to extend, stretch, lengthen) means an intense stretch. The name implies a pose in which the side of the chest is stretched intensely. See B. K. S. Iyengar, *Light on Yoga*, Harper Collins Publishers, New Delhi, 1991, pp. 78-79.
- 36 One can find in any temple of south India having the image of the mother goddess or Lajja Gauri, the devotees apply vermilion to her secret parts and worship it. Though, these kinds of worship are not popular in the temple. Separate rituals are conducted for this minor deity in a corner without much importance. Some of the devotees still worship it and these customs are popularly found in Andhra, particularly in Srisailam, Karnataka, Kerala, Puducherry and Tamil Nadu.
- 37 Kinsley, David, *The Ten Mahavidyas: Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, Motilal Banarasidass, Private Limited, Delhi, 1998 (rep), p. 248.
- 38 Ravi S. Singh, 'The Goddess Kamakhya Temple Complex: Symbolism, Sacredscape, and Festivals', in *Man in India: An international Journal of Anthropology*, Serial Publications, New Delhi, Jan-Jun 2009, Vol. 89, Nos.1-2, pp. 125-126
- 39 Sankalia, H. D. *The Nude Goddess or "Shameless Woman" in Western Asia, India, and South-Eastern Asia*, Artibus Asiae Publishers, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1960), pp. 111-123.
- 40 This image with lotus head is depicted and still worshipped in Alampuram, the western gateway of Srisailam, which belongs to The Chalukyan period of 9th to 11th century A.D.
- 41 Bhattacharyya, N. N., *op.cit.*, pp.294-297.
- 42 See Ezhilraman, R., 'Sculptural Representations of the Nava Nathas in the Jalakanteswara Temple, Kalasipalyam, Karanataka: A Study', Paper presented in the 20th session of the Karnataka History Congress, Bangalore, 29th-31st October, 2009.

- 43 However, the name *Varaha Natha* is not included in the various available lists of *Navanathas*.
- 44 Iyengar, B.K.S. *Op.cit.*, p. 63.
- 45 He is depicted sometimes as nude with his male organ visible. For details see, R. Ezhilraman, 'Sculptural Representations of the Nava Nathas in the Jalakanteswara Temple, Kalasipalyam, Karanataka: A Study', Paper presented at the 20th session of the Karnataka History Congress, Bangalore, 29th-31st October, 2009.
- 46 The *Natha* with a boar behind him is found in almost all medieval temples of South India, particularly in Thajavur, Gangaikonda Cholapuram, Marudamalai, Virdhachalam, Chidambaram, Tirunelveli, Kanyakumari, Puducherry, and so on. In Karnataka, he is depicted as seated on it. For E.g. sculptures at Jalakanteswara temple, Kalasipalyam, Someswara temple, Halsoor and Yoga Nandiswara temple, Nandi.
- 47 For more yogic *âsanâs* See Iyengar, B.K.S., *op.cit.*, p. 307-308
- 48 Iyengar, B.K.S., *Op.cit.*, p. 203-204
- 49 Bhattacharyya, N.N., *Op.cit.*, p. 410.

# **JAINISM UNDER VIJAYANAGARA**

**Dr. T. SURYA PRAKASH**

*Teaching Assistant, Dept. of History,  
S.K.University, Anantapur, A.P.*

and

**Dr. Y. RAMACHANDRA REDDY**

*Associate Professor, Dept. of History,  
S.K.University, Anantapur, A.P.*

## **Introduction**

The history of medieval Jainism in southern and western India, especially of the famous Empire of Vijayanagara, can be best understood only when it is studied in relation to the activities of its votaries in the ages preceding the rise of the sons of Sangama. It is essentially the history of a sect which, having sought shelter in Karnataka from a grave calamity that had overtaken it in its own home in the North, rose to unrivalled brilliance in the land of its adoption not only in the fields of letters, arts, and religion but in the domain of politics as well. At the hands of writers on Indian history, however, the influence which this profound faith cast in the South has not received the attention it has deserved<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, it may be said without any exaggeration that this subject has been almost ignored by the historians of India. It is, therefore, better to delineate in brief such of the important facts which are available in the numerous epigraphic records and literature of Karnataka, the Telugu and Tamil lands, and which give us an idea of the remarkable contribution Jainism made to the stability and success of many

kingdoms and notably of that most magnificent product of medieval Hindu statesmanship - the Empire of Vijayanagara.

It is necessary to bear in mind here a few considerations in regard to the subject before us. In the first place, while it is undoubtedly true that Jainism claimed great antiquity in certain parts of southern India where it made perceptible progress for some time, it always reckoned Karnataka as its home where both during the days of its highest splendour as well as in the period of its comparative insignificance, it never failed to receive the warmest hospitality and the sincerest devotion from the people. Hence, the history of Jainism in southern India is primarily the history of that religion in Karnataka. This is the reason why, while studying the annals of Jainism under Vijayanagara, which was till the days of the famous Aravidu family thoroughly Karnataka in origin and culture, we should pay due attention to the part played by the followers of the Jina *dharma* in moulding the destiny of western and southern India in the pre-Vijayanagara days. We have, therefore, to acquaint ourselves with the facts relating to the advent of that religion into Karnataka, and the circumstances which led to its being a most potent factor in the history of western India till the fourteenth century A.D., before we deal with its progress and decline in the Vijayanagara Empire. This will explain the widespread and abiding influence which Jainism had in the land, and at the same time enable us to understand how it functioned throughout the history of the Vijayanagara Empire.

The advent of Jainism into Karnataka, and, therefore, into southern India, is connected with the immigration of Jainas under their celebrated leader Bhadrabahu, the last of the great *srutakevalis*, and his disciple, the Mauryan Emperor Chandragupta. Southern tradition, corroborated by literary and

epigraphic evidence, relates that Bhadrabahu after predicting a twelve year' famine and drought in the North, led the migration of the Jaina *sangha* to the south. He was accompanied by Chandragupta Maurya. On reaching Sravanabelgola, Bhadrabahu, perceiving that his end was drawing near, ordered the *sangha* to proceed on its way, and he remained on the smaller hill called Kalbappu, Katavapra, Chikka Betta, at Sravanabelgola, where he was tended till his last moments by his royal disciple. The latter survived his teacher by twelve years, which were spent in penance on the hill, and then he died there<sup>2</sup>.

Notwithstanding a few discrepancies between the traditional account of the migration that are left to us by early Jaina writers, it may be taken as an undisputed fact that the Jainas migrated to the fertile regions of Karnataka in the days of the first Ganadhara Bhadrabahu whose death, according to all Jaina authors from Hemachandra down to the most modern scholars, took place in B.C.297<sup>3</sup>.

This definiteness in regard to the Jaina migration to Karnataka is substantiated in the researches of the late Mr. B.L. Rice and the late *Prakatana Vimarsa Vicaksana Mahamahopadhyaya* R. Narasimhacharya. On the strength of the inscriptions on the summit of Chandragiri itself and elsewhere, the writings of early Jaina writers like Harisena (A.D. 931), and medieval and later writers like Ratnanandi (*circa* A.D. 1450), Chidanandakavi (A.D. 1680), and Devachandra (A.D. 1838), these scholars have shown that credence may certainly be given to the tradition of the migration of the Jainas to the South under the leadership of the fifth and the last of the great *srutakevalis*, Bhadrabahu and his royal disciple<sup>4</sup>.

## Vijayanagara patronage of Jainism

The sincerity of purpose which generally lay behind the actions of the monarchs of Vijayanagara is seen not only in the assurance which they publicly gave to religious bodies, but also in the honest attempts which they made to promote the material interests of religions which they did not profess. These rulers were truly defenders of all faiths. The fact that the kingdom of Vijayanagara had come into existence for many reasons including the Hindu religion and culture.<sup>5</sup> did not prevent the monarchs of Vijayanagara from giving their help to non-Hindu religions. On the other hand, it was their proud boast -and we may, at once, observe that this was not unjustifiable at all - that they were the champions of the *sakalavarnasrama* of the people. Further, they carried out faithfully their promise to protect the *dharma* of all sections of the people<sup>6</sup>.

With regard to Jainism their attitude was by no means different. It is evident that the noble example of King Bukka Raya I exercised a great influence on his successors. Hence, we find that kings and queens and other members of the royal family gave unstinted patronage to the cause of the *anekantamata* in the Empire. It is interesting to note in this connection that the impulse to support the cause of the *Jina dharma* came from the queens of Vijayanagara, one of whom was a Jaina herself. This was Bhima Devi, who was the queen of Deva Raya I. Her spiritual guru was Panditacharya; and in about A.D. 1410, she caused an image of Santinathasvami to be made in the Mangayi *basadi* at Sravanabelgola<sup>7</sup>. This temple, we may note by the way, had been built in about A.D. 1325, by Mangayi of Belgola, “a crest jewel of royal dancing girls”, and a lay disciple of Abhinava Charukiriti Pandita, of the same place<sup>8</sup>. But about the identity of Panditacharya, no details are forthcoming<sup>9</sup>.

Queen Bhima Devi may have been responsible for the generous attitude of King Deva Raya I towards the Jaina gurus. Evidence from two inscriptions definitely points to the high favour in which that monarch held the Jina faith and its champions<sup>10</sup>. The Padmavati *basti* inscription of Humcha, contains the statement that Dharmabhusana guru, the chief disciple of Vardhamanamuni, and a great orator, was served by *munis* and *rajas*. Dharmabhusana “had his two feet illumined by the crown of the *rajadhiraja paramesvara*, the kind Deva Raya”<sup>11</sup>. From the royal titles given to the ruler in this record, it is clear that the reference is only to King Deva Raya I of Vijayanagara. What seems certain is that the Vijayanagara ruler showed his great concern about the famous centre of the Jainas - Sravanabelgola<sup>12</sup>. Hence, in about A.D. 1420 he ordered the gift of the village Belame in Mepinad for a *vrtti* for the worship of Gummataśvami of Belgola. And the great minister Baicha Dannayaka carried out at once the royal behest,<sup>13</sup> obviously in imitation of his noble father. Prince Harihara gave munificent gifts to the *basadi* at Kanakagiri.

The next monarch who continued the tradition of the early Vijayanagara rulers of bestowing patronage on the Jaina institutions was King Deva Raya II (A.D. 1419- A.D.1446). In A.D. 1424 he made over the village of Varanga in Tuluva to the *basadi* of Varanga Neminatha of the same place<sup>14</sup>.

Of Krishna Deva Raya, the Great it may be said that he made no distinction between the different faiths in his Empire. His large-hearted benevolence was primarily responsible for the gifts he made to Jaina temples in two distant provinces of his Empire. He gave gifts of two villages to the *basadi* of Trailokyanatha at Tirupparutti-kunru, Kanchi Taluka, Chingleput District, once in the cyclic year *Dhatri* (corresponding to the

*Saka* year 1438 - A.D. 1516), and then again in A.D. 1440 (A.D. 1519)<sup>15</sup>. In A.D. 1528, the same monarch gave a gift to the *basadi* at Chippagiri, Aluru taluka, Bellary district, and had the endowment recorded on the walls of the smaller Venkataramana temple of that place<sup>16</sup>.

Before we proceed to describe the efforts made by the nobles and generals of Vijayanagara to help the cause of the *anekantamata* in the great city of Vijayanagara and outside, we may explain the position of that religion in the famous capital itself. Here it is necessary to observe that the accounts of foreign travellers do not enlighten us on this question at all.<sup>117</sup> But we have to depend upon the numerous epigraphs which contain, as usual valuable details concerning Jainism in the city of Vijayanagara. The initiative for helping the Jina faith was taken by the Vijayanagara generals and the royal ladies of the court. It was here in the capital that the Jaina army general Irugappa Dandanayaka built a *basadi*. The queens of Vijayanagara were not slow in bestowing their patronage on these Jaina institutions in the capital. An inscription in that city tells us that Bukkavve, the queen of Vira Harihara Raya (i.e., Harihara Raya II) gave a gift to the *basadi* built by general Irugappa, in the cyclic year Isvara. This cyclic year corresponds to the *Saka* year 1319 (A.D. 1397)<sup>18</sup>.

Among the monarchs Deva Raya II stands high in the estimation of the Jainas for having built a *basadi* in the capital itself. An inscription in a ruined *basadi* in that city dated *Saka* 1348 Parabhava (A.D. 1426) records the building of a *caityalaya* to Parsvanatha at the orders of that monarch in the Pansupari street of the capital<sup>19</sup>. "Emperor Deva Raya II's act of benevolence needs comment. He gave concrete expression to the feeling of reciprocal goodwill which King Bukka Raya had so admirably



shown in A.D. 1368. To the Jainas, his action gave one more proof that the Vijayanagara monarchs were more than ever sincere in promoting the cause of the Jina *dharm*a unlike the measures he had taken on behalf of his Muhammadan subjects, for whose sake he had ordered a copy of the *Quran* to be placed by the side of his throne<sup>20</sup>. This step in connection with the Jainas had no political significance, since the latter never assumed at any time, either in the reign of that monarch or in that of his predecessors, such proportions as to threaten the internal stability of the Empire. We may, therefore, assume that the construction of the Parsvanatha *basadi* in the capital was obviously meant to satisfy the religious need of the time, and especially to demonstrate once again the validity of one of the *birudas* borne by the Emperors of Vijayanagara, viz., that they were the protectors of *sakalavarnasrama dharm*a.

In addition to these Jina temples, we have a ruined *basadi* in the capital to the south of Hampi. Unfortunately, the record which was found here is damaged and no details can be made out of it <sup>21</sup>. The fact that the Sanskrit portions of two fragments of a sculptured piece of black granite discovered in the north-west of the famous Mahanavami Dibba in the capital, refer thrice to the death of a Jaina *guru* named Maladharideva,<sup>22</sup> suggests that there must have been another *Jinalaya* near that well known platform about which, too, unfortunately no details are known. As to the identity of Maladharideva, we have likewise no clue.

In the history of Jainism in the great capital much credit is to be given to General Irugappa, the most prominent Jaina general of the age. From an inscription dated A.D. 1422 found at Sravana Belagola, we gather many details about the parentage of this Dandanayaka. He belonged to a line of loyal State

servants. His grandfather was Baicha Dandesa, the Mahapradhana of King Bukka Raya. Of uncommon liberality, forbearance, and learning, Baica Dandesa was noted for his policy which was “worthy to be approved by all”. He had three sons-the eldest General Mangappa, “who was honoured in the world for his virtues”. General Irugappa, and Bukkanna. General Mangappa was a devout Jaina. The record calls him “a supporting tree to (the creeper) dharma”, and “an adherent of the Jainagama”. By his wife Janaki, he had two sons-General Baicappa and General Irugappa. The latter is the subject of our remarks.

The same inscription bestows much praise on General Irugappa, praising his martial disposition, general character and devotion to the Jaina religion<sup>23</sup>. “General Irugappa was dutiful to his ruler, generous to the worthy, considerate to the needy, and devoted to Jina.

We have now to see whether the praise given to him was in any way justifiable. General Irugappa appears for the first time in A.D. 1382 when he made a gift of land to the ancient Trailokyanatha *basadi* at Tirupparuttikunru in the Chingleput district. This was during the reign of King Harihara Raya II. The gift was made, we may observe, for the merit of Prince Bukka Raya, in the cyclic year *Dundubhi* corresponding to *Saka* 1304 (A.D. 1382)<sup>24</sup>. We are to suppose from this that General Irugappa first sought state service under Prince Bukka, the future Bukka Raya, and the son of King Harihara Raya II, in the Chingleput district. This is proved by another record dated only in the cyclic year *Prabhava* and found in the same *basadi*, in which it is said that the *mantapa* in front of the same *basadi* was built by General Irugappa at the instance of his guru Puspasena<sup>25</sup>. The cyclic year *Prabhava* corresponds to *Saka* 1309, and we have, therefore, to suppose that General Irugappa’s official connection with the south lasted till A.D. 1387.

While the Jaina general was thus adding to the prosperity of a Jaina institution which, since the days of the famous Chola monarch Raja Raja, had received patronage at the hands of the southern rulers,<sup>26</sup> certain domestic events necessitated General Irugappa's presence at the capital where we find him as the Minister of King Harihara Raya II. It is enough to note that in the capital, he built the *chaityalaya* of Kunthu (or Kundu) Jinanatha which was completed on February, the 16<sup>th</sup> A.D. 1386. This is the temple which is wrongly called nowadays, the Ganigitti temple! The Jaina teacher Simhanandi mentioned in this inscription, was perhaps the same Simhanandi Acharya whose name appears in a record assigned to A.D. 1400 at Sravanabelgola<sup>27</sup>.

There was another side to the remarkable Jaina statesman. Irugappa was an engineer as well. In A.D. 1394, he built the sluice of the tank at Kunigal. The inscription found on the same sluice gives us the interesting information that he was a Sanskrit scholar, too, and that he wrote the Sanskrit work called *Nanartharatnakara*<sup>28</sup>. This versatile statesman was the minister of King Harihara Raya II in A.D.1403<sup>29</sup>.

But he continued to serve also during the reign of King Deva Raya II<sup>30</sup>. The Sravanabelgola inscription dated A.D. 1422 cited above informs us that in that year General Irugappa, in the presence of the Jaina guru Srutamuni, granted the village of Belgula (Belgola itself) for the worship of Gummatesvara<sup>31</sup>. Our surmise that General Irugappa served under King Deva Raya II is further proved by a stone inscription of A.D. 1442 in which that Jaina Commander is described to be the viceroy of Gove (Goa) along with Candragutti. This damaged record mentions an attack on Banavasi by Mallalegade Bamma Gauda, and the success that attended the arms of the loyal citizens<sup>32</sup>.

Thus, we find that General Irugappa's record as a trusted general, a clever engineer, and a successful viceroy lasted over a period of fifty-nine years (A.D. 1383 - A.D. 1442). No Jaina statesman in the history of southern India had such a long period of approved State service to his credit as General Irugappa.

His elder brother General Baichappa was also a devout Jaina. The Sravanabelgola record dated A.D. 1422 calls him *Bavyagrani* (Leader of the Bhavyas). Along with his younger brother he was reckoned to be "a purifier of the path of the *dharma*" (*pavitrikṛta-dharma-marggan*).<sup>33</sup> In about A.D. 1420 Baicha Dannayaka was the *Mahapradhana* of King Deva Raya II. While he was working in this capacity he carried out the royal order and provided a *vṛtti* for the worship of Gommatasvami of Belgola, granting the village of Belame<sup>34</sup>.

Some of General Irugappa's colleagues were also Jainas. Thus, we have in about A.D. 1400, the Brahman Kunchi Raja, who was the disciple of Chandrakiritideva<sup>35</sup>.

Another well known Jaina official of the age of General Irugappa was the *Mahapradhana* Gopa Chamupa, who was placed in charge of the famous hill-fortress of Nidugal. He is described as "a full moon in the raising of the tide of the ocean of the Jaina *sangha* (*Jainendra-samayambudhi-var dhana puma-candra*) in an undated and incomplete record, thereby suggesting that he materially added to the cause of Jainism. Rice doubtfully assigned this record to A.D. 1410<sup>36</sup>, obviously on the assumption that he is mentioned as ruling the great Nidugal hill-fortress during the reign of King Deva Raya I. We have some interesting details about this military officer. These are gathered from a stone inscription dated A.D. 1408. He belonged to a line of benevolent Jainas. His father was called Siriyanna Sripati,

the lord of Bandhavapura, and a disciple of Santisvara. And Sriyanna's father was Gopa *Mahaprabhu*, the governor of Kuppatur. Gopa had a blameless career like steps to paradise. We shall have to see in some detail about the well known city of Bandhavapura in the Vijayanagara times. Gopa Chamupa, was a Gauda; and his *guru* was Siddantacharya of the mula *sangha* and Desiya *gana*. This inscription relates that he received instruction in Jinendra *dharma* from his *guru* Siddhantadeva, accompanied by numerous lucid comments, Gopanna became a good servant of the faith. He constructed a *Jinalaya* in Kuppatur, which he richly endowed.

The Malenad Mahaprabhu Gopanna had two wives named Gopayi and Padmayi, who in devotion to Jina *dharma* were equal to their husband. The moment came for Gopa *Mahaprabhu* to show to the world his worth as a true Jaina. After having enjoyed the company of his wives for many days, he abandoned family pleasures. To the Brahmans he gave gifts of gold, cows, grain, and the like. He discarded the pleasures of the mind and the palate, repeated the praises and prayers of the Jina *dharma*, and taking the hand of *moksa Lakshmi* with great joy went to heaven (on the date specified in detail), amidst the plaudits of all the good. But his wives were not behind him in their devotion to the Jina *dharma*. Seeing that, they made at once all gifts to Brahmans, with pure mind, reverence to the lotus feet of Siddantacharya, and thinking of the great Vitaraga, went to heaven<sup>37</sup>.

Now this record is dated A.D. 1408; and it cannot be that Gopa *Mahaprabhu* was the commandant of the Nidugal fortress in A.D. 1410, as suggested by Rice. Hence, we have to suppose that Gopa *Mahaprabhu* was placed over that hill-fortress prior to A.D. 1408.

Gopa *Mahaprabhu* seems to have been a great patriot. This alone explains why the scribe, who mentions his death, eulogizes the land of Karnataka as a country that was distinguished in many ways and in beauty, was beyond description<sup>38</sup>.

We may mention two more names of high officials of this age in order to complete the account of the men of action of early Vijayanagara history. One is that of Masanahalli Kampana Gauda, the great lord of Bayinad. He was the disciple of Panditadeva. In A.D. 1424, he granted the village of Totahalli situated in his own Bayinad for the worship of Gummatanathasvami of Belgola.<sup>39</sup> The other example is that of Vallabharajadeva Maha-arasu, the grandson of *Mahamandalesvara* Sripati Raja, and the son of Rajayadeva Maha-arasu. The solicitude which the Vijayanagara officials felt for Jainism even in the last quarter of the sixteenth century A.D. is seen in the inscription relating to that high official.

When Chinnavara Govinda Setti, the son of Gutti Haradare Setti, petitioned in A.D. 1579 to Vallabharajadeva that the *manya* lands of the god of Heggara *basadi* should be maintained, “in order to comply with his petition”, Vallabharaja granted specific lands in Heggare for the god Jina of that locality in the Budihalsime<sup>40</sup>.

## References

1. One finds little about this subject in most of the modern works dealing with the history and religions of India. The *Cambridge History of India*, I, for example, has only a few lines on this question: pp. 166-167. Other-writers like Glasenapp, *Der Jainismus*, and C. Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer* (revised edition. Bangalore), have nothing more than the few well known facts to relate.

2. Charpentier discredits the account of the *Digambaras* and asserts that Bhadrababhu retired to Nepal in order to pass the remaining days of his life in penance, leaving the succession to Sthulabhadra, a disciple of Bhadrabahu's own contemporary, the highpriest Sambhutavijaya. *Cambridge History of India*, I.p. 165.
3. Jacobi, *Kalpasutra* Intr., p.13.
4. Rice, *Mysore and Coorg* from the Inscriptions, pp. 2-10; Narasimhacharya, *Inscriptions at Sravana Belgola*, pp. 36-40. Smith accepted this tradition. *Oxford History of India*, pp. 75-76. Fleet tried to maintain that this Jaina tradition had no historical basis. *Indian Antiquary*, XXI, p. 156; *Epigraphia Indica*, IV, pp.22-24, 339; *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society for 1909*, p. 23; *ibid* for 1911, p. 816. But both Rice and Narasimhacharya have successfully proved that Fleet's contention was wrong. *Mysore and Coorg*, p.7, n. (1) *Inscriptions at Sravana Belgola*, p. 40, Dr. Sharma. Sastry, while squaring some synchronisms with the initial year of the Gupta era, viz., A.D. 200-201, which, according to him, is the correct date, that given by Dr. Fleet, viz., A.D. 319-20 being wrong - opines that it was Bhadrababu III, and Chandragupta II, who came to Kalbappu. (*Mysore Archaeological Report for 1923*, p. 23).
5. Read Saletore, S.P. *Life*, I.p. 13, seq; 245.
6. *Ibid.*, II p. 24 seq.
7. E.C. n., Intr. p.29; 337, p. 144.
8. *Ibid.*, 33a, p. 145.
9. There is an Abhinava Panditacarya mentioned in circa A.D. 1311, *Ibid*, 495, pp. 133-4.
10. There were two *Dharmabhusanas* in the Jaina spiritual lists. A damaged record of A.D. 1372 tells us that Subhakirtideva's disciple was Dharmabhusana (I) whose disciple was Amarakirti whose disciple was Dharmabhusana(II)

whose praise (?) seems to be recorded. Vardhamana Svami caused an epitaph to be made in that year (E.O II, 274, p. 125). Another record found at Humcca gives the following fact - that Amarakirti's beloved disciple was Dharmabhusana Bhattaraka. (M.A.R. for 1934, p. 176). Dr. Krishna assigned this record to the age of King Deva Raya I, and placed Dharmabhusana in the fifteenth century. The two records of Belgola and Humcca, therefore, agree in making Dharmabhusana (II) the disciple of Amarakirthi, while the Padmavati *basti* record clearly says that Dharmabhusana was the chief disciple (*maukhamukhya*) of Vardhamana. This discrepancy cannot be solved for the present.

11. There is an Abhinava Panditacarya mentioned in circa A.D. VIII, No.46, p.49.
12. Saletore, *Karnataka Historical, Review*. IV. Pp. 77-86.
13. E.C. V. Mj. 58, p. 273.
14. Sewell *Lists of Antiquities*, C.P. No. 89; Rangacharya, *Top List.*, II., p.875.
15. 188 of 1901; 45 of 1890; Rangacharya, *ibid*, I. p. 375; Swamikannu, *Ind. Ephem.* V. pp. 234-240.
16. *Bellary Gazetteer*, I. p. 210; Rangacharya, *ibid*, I. p. 258; Seshagiri Rao, *op. Cit.*, p. 35.
17. Read Saletore, S.P., *Life*, II. p. 27 seq.
18. 501 of 1907; Rangacharya, *Top List.*, I, p. 313; Swamikannu, *op.cit.*, IV. p. 396.
19. 32 of 1889; S. III, 153, pp. 160-167; Rangacharya, *ibidi*, I. p. 312; Ramaswami, *Studies*, p. 118. It is wrong to say that King Deva Raya I, built this temple (V.R. Ramachandra Dikshitar, *Indian Historical Quarterly*, XIII p. 259).
20. Saletore, S.P. *Life.*, I. p.439
21. 42 of 1889.
22. 545 of 1893.
23. E.C. II, 253, pp. 106-108.



24. 41 of 1890; S. I. I., I., p. 156; Rangacharya, *Top. List.*, I., p. 375; Swamikannu *op. cit.* V. p. 366.
25. 42 of 1880; E.I. VII. p. 116; Rangacharya, *Ibid*, I. p. 375; Swamikannu, *Op.cit.*, TV. p. 376.
26. 17 of 1889; S. I. I., I., 152, pp. 155-160. Sewell commits an error when he makes Irugappa, the son of Baicayya. *Historical Inscriptions of Southern India*, p.203 (Ed. By S.K. Aiyangar, Madras, 1932). This work is incomplete, for it has not taken into account a number of inscriptions pertaining to the history of Vijayanagara and early times.
27. E.C. II. 276, p. 125.
28. M.A.R. *for* 1919, pp. 13, 33; EC. II. P. Intr. P.64, Rangacharya, *Top List.*, I. p. 101.
29. E.C. XII. Si 95, p. 101.
30. *Ibid*, II, Intr. p. 64.
31. *Ibid* ,II, 253, *op. Cit.*
32. E.C. II., vi. Sb, 498, p. 82.
33. *Ibid*, VI, 253, *op. cit.*
34. *Ibid*, V. Mj. 58. *op. cit.*
35. *Ibid*, IV, Ch. 151, 152, *op. cit.*
36. E.C. XI, Hr. 28, pp. 107-108.
37. E.C. VIII, Sb. 261, pp. 41-42.
38. See motto at the beginning of this work.
39. E.C. IV. Hg. I, p. 65.
40. E.C. IV, XII, Ci. 22, p.78.

# **A BRIEF NOTE ON TANDAS OF RAMAKUPPAM IN CHITTOOR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH**

**Dr. D. MERCY RATNA RANI**

*Assistant Professor*

*Department of History, Archaeology & Culture,  
Dravidian University, Kuppam*

The present paper deals with the socio-economic, cultural and religious processes of the Sugalis, a nomadic tribe inhabiting the Ramakuppam mandalan of Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh.

Several definitions are coined for the word “Tribe” as far as the Indian context is concerned. In the census of India 1926, it is described as a “Group of simple persons occupying a common area having a common language ...and a common action in warfare”. According to scholars, tribes are a group of people who have a common language and they inhabit a common territory”. They further describe them as a “collection of families or group of families bearing a common name, members of which occupying the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos... and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations”.

In due course of time, the wandering Lambadas finally settled down and engaged themselves in agriculture and other occupations. ‘Their settlements are called *Tandas*; especially located in and around the hilly tracts or sometimes on the outskirts of major villages. In Andhra Pradesh, they are called Banjaras in the coastal area. Sugalis in Rayalaseema and Lambada

in Telangana. There are eighteen *Tandas* settled in Ramakuppam Mandalam of Chittoor District such as Chelimichenu Tanda (40 houses with 220 people), Shivajinagar Tanda (15 houses with 90 people). Chikkapalli Tanda (50 Houses with 270 people). Konnala Konda Tanda (25 houses with 205 people). Tekumanu Tanda (40 houses with 340 people), Tulasinayak Tanda (30 houses with 160 people), Addagattu Tanda (50 houses with 120 people), Bandakothuru Tanda (40 houses with 200 people), Veernamala Tanda (140 houses with 570 people), Gutturu Tanda (45 houses with 235 people), Marrimanu Tanda (20 houses with 190 people), Ramapuram Tanda (40 houses with 160 people), Naniyala Tanda (75 houses with 390 people), Karnalapatti Tanda (25 houses with 170 people), Narayanapuram Tanda (120 houses with 370 people), Pulimadugu Tanda (55 houses with 300 people), Pandyalamadugu Kotturu Tanda (40 houses with 270 people), and Tagarala Tanda (15 houses with 160 people). Their life style is same in all the settlements.

The original home of the Sugalis is believed to be Marwar in Rajasthan. They came to the Deccan as transporters or suppliers of merchandise to the armies of the Delhi rulers in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, they were unsettled nomads and took to robbery (Craufurd - 1872, Ibbetson-1883). Some of the Sugalis went back to the north but some settled in South India. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century: they had taken up service under the Maratha rulers of Satara, the Peshwas of Poona, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the British in their Mysore and Maratha Wars. During the British rule, the Sugalis gave up much of their traditional occupation of transporting goods due to the introduction of mechanized transport, laying of roads and rail lines by the Government. Hence, they turned to the forests for their livelihood by cutting wood and collecting other forest products. But they could not survive for long as the forest products diminished due

to deforestation. Being poor, illiterate and lacking in technical skills, the Sugalis degenerated and took to crimes like robbery, dacoity, cattle-lifting and kidnapping of children until the middle of the 19th century. To reform them through persuasion and education was impossible for the British administration. Therefore, in order to control their criminal or illegal activities, they were brought under the ambit of the Criminal Tribes Act XXVII of 1871. After the 1880's, sale of forest produce and pastoralism became their main occupations. However, by 1930, the forest work had ceased to provide them with enough earnings because of deforestation, and strict implementation of forest protection measures and declaration of some forests as reserved forests. So, the Sugali men oriented themselves, towards agriculture and other types of labour in order to supplement the earnings of their women. But after 1930, they ultimately settled down first as pastoralists and then as agriculturists, although agriculture had never been the main occupation in their life. After Independence, they have been recognized as a Scheduled Tribe(ST).

The Sugalis are divided into two main groups known as Mood and Bookhe. Further, they are divided into ten-sub groups: Jatrot, Bannot, Marajot, Ambotha, Kumbavat. Popatar. Ketavat, Jannot, Desavat, and Vadithe. Matrimonial relations are developed between Mood (M) and Bookhe (B). Dowry system exists in their society. Those who are educated are demanding nearly Rs.20,000/- to Rs.30,000/- as dowry along with animals and land. Before and after marriage the women of *Tanda* gather and communicate among themselves about the problems that she / they face in her/their husbands house.

The *Tandas* are engaged in agriculture and rearing of animals. They have learned to raise their produce and to sell them in nearby markets. More than half of the Sugalis are

landless labourers. They live in huts or mud houses. The government is constructing *pucca* houses for them through the Indira *Gruhanirvahaka* Scheme. The poverty of the *Tandas* is due to migration. Since the male members migrate to the towns (Bangalore), women are the major sufferers as they have to take care of their families. The condition of women is very poor among the *Tandas*. As they obtain some kind of work in the towns, the majority of them do not return to their native places except for attending some functions and ceremonies. When a for Sugali dies from his native place, the dead body has to be taken compulsorily to his *Tanda* and buried there. They have no clothes to wear due to their poverty. Due to poor sanitation, they are frequently affected by diseases and more people are prone to ill health.

The Sugali women are fond of wearing colourful garments. The waist garment is a multi-coloured one with small pieces of mirrors and beads of various sizes. Similarly, they wear an upper garment, a long armed black *Choli* which is also bedecked with mirror pieces and beads. Besides, the two piece outfit, they have a colourful cloth to cover the head, during certain occasions. They do not mingle with other people because they are shy. The Sugalis of Ramakuppam Mandalam speak Telugu and Hindi along with Sugali.

Every *Tanda* of Ramakuppam Mandalam has three heads; Naik, Karbari and Daov. The house of Naik is known as Naikkerghar or Motoghar. “Moto” means elder. The wife of a Naik is known as Naikergonni. Gonni means wife. These three important persons settle the disputes when disputes arise among the *Tandas*. The headmen of all *Tandas* and the people gathered at *Raccha* and settled the disputes and punish those who commit a crime and before entering into any *Tanda*, the police has to take permission from the Naik.

The *Tandas* of Ramakuppam Mandalam celebrate Racchadevara festival and two or three *Tandas* unite and celebrate this. During such occasions, they invite other “*Tanda* people to take part in this festival. Every Sugali family should give Rs. 150 to Rs.500 for purchase of rams. Some of the *Tandas* have been converted to Christianity. They also give money for this occasion. But they do not participate in the festivities.

Only few of them are educated. Every *Tanda* has a primary school. Only Veernamala *Tanda* has a high school. They do not want to send their girls for higher studies. They are against inter-caste marriages. They have strong faith in their customs and superstitions. Those who perform *Mantras* are known as *Dakhi*. Such *Tandas* are residing on the outskirts of villages.

## References

1. Campbell, James. M, Bombay Gazetteer-Karnatak (Kanara)
2. Bombay, Government of Bombay Presidency, 1883. *Encyclopaedia of Dravidian Tribes*, Vol-1, Kerala, 1996,.
3. Hegde, B.K., A *Tanda* - “Where A Nomadic Tribe’s Wander Ends,” *Mard of Karnataka*, May, 1983.
4. Reddy, Krishna, B., “*Forests and the Sugalis in Andhra Pradesh: Historical and Anthropological Perspectives*” *Man in India*, Vol. 71 No: 4, 1991.

# **PLANTATION ECONOMY OF BRITISH MALABAR**

**Dr. LAKSHMANAN**

*Sr. Grade Lecturer in History*

*Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit  
Kalady, Kerala*

Malabar lying on the western coast of India and this distinct part of Kerala had a complex land tenure system under the British and an interesting history of development of plantations. The East India Company annexed Malabar in 1792 and made it a part of the Bombay Presidency and later Madras. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a great increase in the agricultural production and a vast expansion of cash crops such as coconut, spices, tea and cashew in the region. The growing demand for agricultural products in European market created the process of commercialization in agricultural sector and it paved the way for the development of plantations in Malabar. There was a gradual shift from subsistence farming to commercial farming viz, pepper and coconut for export market. The rise in prices, expansion of transporting facilities etc. gave an impetus to the growth of plantations. With the consolidation and extension of British rule, the nascent forces of monetization and market economy were considerably accelerated. This acceleration was further due to the changes brought about by the revenue system of East India Company. The vast tracts of waste lands in Malabar thus attracted the capitalists to invest money in the plantations, especially in hilly regions of the Western Ghats.

After taking control of Malabar in 1792, the British introduced an unequal land revenue system in Malabar. The British recognized

the absolute right of landlords. The British recognition of *jenmi* as an owner of the soil formed the lasting basis of British land policy in Malabar throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. The colonial period saw the full development of land in private property by which land could be sold, bought, mortgaged and auctioned. The colonial policy of extracting a large amount of agricultural produce as land revenue and strengthening of landlordism had adversely affected the cultivators. The tenant's right to subsistence in Malabar was among the weakest of any district in British India.

The chief traditional products of Malabar were rice of various kinds, *ragi*, pulse, coconut, areca nut, ginger and lemon grass. The cultivation of paddy was usually carried out in wet, dry and garden lands. The garden lands were usually used for the cultivation of coconut, pepper, areca and jack trees<sup>2</sup>. The '*Punam*', a part of shifting cultivation was a mixed crop of rice and millet grown on hillsides. Coconut was very significant to the agrarian economy of Malabar. Coconut cultivation became the basis for a variety of processing industries as also for a wide range of trading activity. The coconut and its products commanded high prices in world markets, and the cropping pattern underwent significant changes and production became profit oriented. The good quality of pepper in Malabar was from the northern Taluks of the district especially from Chirakkal and Kottayam, where it was cultivated mainly as a garden crop and scattered over many small plots of land<sup>3</sup>.

Cardamom remained mainly a forest produce and it was grown mainly in Wayanad and Kottayam Taluks. The first attempt to estimate the area under cardamom production and its yield was made by the British government in 1902<sup>4</sup>.



The growing demand for agricultural products in the European markets created the process of commercialization in the agricultural sector in which small cultivators participated willingly. There was a gradual shift away from subsistence farming to commercial farming, viz, pepper and coconut for an export market. Rack renting, insecurity of tenure, evictions and the British policy of pauperizing the peasantry through exorbitant revenue demands and a stagnant wet land economy and such other developments in course of time led cultivators to cultivate cash crops out of desperation<sup>5</sup>.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a wave of opening of plantations in Malabar. Rise in prices, expansion in transporting facilities etc. gave an impetus to the growth of plantations, which had already begun towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>6</sup>. The British made many attempts to introduce various commercial crops including the establishment of experimental farms and offered grant of advances for cultivation and of rewards for excellence, distribution of seeds etc. These measures were taken for all the cash crops. The English East India Company started the organised cultivation of spices on a large scale. In 1797 the Company opened a plantation of about 1,000 acres at Randathara in Anjarakkandy for the cultivation of special products such as cinnamon, coffee, pepper, nutmeg, cassia, sugarcane and sandalwood etc<sup>7</sup>. A few planters from Ceylon arrived at Anjarakkandy and were entrusted with the job of tending the plants and preparing cinnamon bark for market<sup>8</sup>. The growing demand for Indian agricultural products in European markets during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century accelerated the commercialization of agriculture. The fall in ocean freight rates, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 helped to make Indian commodities attractive to European buyers<sup>9</sup>. With the consolidation and extension of British rule, the

nascent forces of monetization and market economy were considerably accelerated. This accelerated increase was due to the changes brought about by the revenue system of the East India Company. Thus, the commercialization of agriculture was the immediate consequence of British policy<sup>10</sup>.

It is significant that the organised plantation economy in Malabar was actually started with the commencement of coffee plantation in Wayanad. The first plantation was started at Mananthoddy in 1840. In 1846, another coffee plantation was opened in South Wayanad. In 1866, coffee had become an important industry in Wayanad and it was proposed to assess coffee gardens at a uniform rate of Rs.2/- per acre<sup>11</sup>. In 1866, there were about 200 coffee estates in Wayanad covering 14,613 acres of which 9,865 acres belonged to Europeans and 4,748 to the natives. Coffee cultivation was started in other Taluks such as Ernad, Valluvanad and Karumbaranad. With the growth of coffee estates, the Government introduced some rules for the collection of coffee tax.

When compared to 1860 - 61, there was a considerable increase in the collection of coffee tax. The labouring class consisted of Panics, and the slaves of Chettis who had, for the most part, preferred the old bondage under their hereditary masters to service on coffee estates. The planters were compelled to take labourers from neighbouring states.

Consequently, thousands of coolies came from the villages of Mysore and other parts of Malabar. In 1860, their pay was only 3 annas per day and in 1866 it was 4 annas. The British were also the pioneers in the field of tea plantation. Tea was firstly introduced in Wayanad by M/s Parry & Co. at Perintottam Estate. The failure of cinchona gave an impetus to its cultivation

and since 1892 many coffee estates were converted into tea gardens.<sup>12</sup> . The Meppady Wayanad Tea Company, the Vellardy Tea Estate Limited, etc. were the other tea companies started during this period.

In 1882, an attempt was made to cultivate rubber trees (*Hevea brasiliensis*) at Ingapuzha at the foot of Thamarasseri ghat on an experimental basis; but it was abandoned owing to the difficulties about the title of the land<sup>13</sup>. But some Wayanad planters tried to cultivate rubber in small plots of land. Gradually, it spread to other areas. By 1930, an area of 9,247 acres was under rubber plantation in Malabar<sup>14</sup>. The re-orientation of agricultural production towards the export market consequent on colonial domination also brought about its own economic and ecological changes to a great extent. The increase of forest clearance began with the appearance of plantation of monocrops like coffee, tea and rubber. The British Government decided to increase revenue by selling wastelands for new cultivation especially for plantations.

The growth and expansion of plantation crops considerably contributed to the increase of cropped area. There was also an increase in the area under paddy cultivation to a large extent. In 1906, paddy was raised in 8,18,616 acres and in 1910 – 11, it increased to 8,53,03, acres. Since all wastelands and forests belonged to the *jeanmis*, the peasants had to get permission from the *jeanmis* for cultivation. The peasant had to bear all the responsibility of cultivation and half of the produce was given as rent to the *jeanmis*<sup>15</sup>. William Logan who made an enquiry into land tenure system in Malabar had recommended that some urgent measures should be taken for bringing wastelands under cultivation<sup>16</sup>. The increase in the agricultural population and the vast expansion of cash crops created many problems for the

tenants. Much of this expansion took place in former forestlands but settled villages were also affected in this process. Pulled by the rising prices of export crops and pushed by the need to pay high revenues, landlords extracted more and more produce from their tenants and labourers and evicted them when they were unable to pay their rents<sup>17</sup>. It ultimately led to the indebtedness of cultivators.

Many of the tenants evicted were helpless and many of them became labourers in plantations<sup>18</sup>. With the growth of plantations, the agricultural labour population increased considerably and the Government was forced to enact some laws for the welfare of the labourers. The Madras Plantation Labour Act was passed in 1903 and aimed at improving the welfare of labourers in the estate lands of cardamom, pepper, coffee, cinchona etc. The Act provided for the benefits like accommodation, water supply, and sanitary arrangements etc<sup>19</sup>. In 1901, there were 108 coffee estates in Malabar with 3157 permanent employees and a large number of non-permanent employees<sup>20</sup>.

In the years before the Depression of the 1930s there was a spurt in land colonisation in various parts of Malabar especially in the high range area. The availability of land led to the encroachment of forestlands for plantations. The Estate Land Act passed by the Government in 1908 gave more rights and privileges to the landholders. The Act made a provision that when a landholder reclaimed wasteland by his own servants or hired labour, he could make a contract with any person from the date of the first cultivation after reclamation. Under this Act, the right of occupancy became heritable and transferable by sale<sup>21</sup>.

The development of plantations was the outcome of the commercialization of agriculture. The growth of the Railways

and foreign trade brought specialisation in the production of commercial crops and farmers were offered consumer goods in exchange for raw agricultural commodities. Self local economy had been displaced by the competition. The increase in cash crops at the expense of food crops helped the people to acquire more money for the time being but left them with less stock of food to feed the people. The development of plantations in which the monocrop system prevailed created ecological imbalances like deforestation, loss of biodiversity etc. However, plantations were preferred and encouraged both by government and people as it led to economic development of the state.

## References

1. Danagare D.N., *Peasant Movement in India 1920-50*, New Delhi, 1983. p. 16
2. Innes, C.A. , *Malabar Gazetteer*, Vol. 1. Trivandrum, 1997, p.208.
3. *Ibid*, p.224.
4. Muthiah, S, A Planting Century, *The First Hundred years of the United Planters' Association of Southern India 1893 -1993*, New Delhi, 1993, pp. 100-101
5. Dilip M. Menon, *Caste, Nationalism and Communism in South India*, Malabar, 1900 – 1948, Cambridge, 1994, p.31.
6. Varghese, T.C., *Agrarian Change and Economic Consequences Land Tenures in Kerala 1850 –1960*, New Delhi, 1970, p.116.
7. Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol. II, New Delhi, 1995.
8. Ratnam R, *Agricultural Development in Madras State Prior to 1990*, Madras, 1996, p.352.
9. Kumar , Dharma (Ed.), *The Cambridge Economic History of India*, Vol. III, 1757 - 1970, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 889-890.

10. Ghosh, Ambica, *Emerging Capitalism in Indian Agriculture*, New Delhi, 1988, p.41.
11. Logan, William, n.7. p.705.
12. Innes, C.A., n.2, p.226.
13. Kunhikrishnan, K.V. Forest Policy and Administration in British Malabar 1800 -1947, (Un published Ph.D, thesis, University of Calicut, p. 37)
14. Innes, C.A. , n.2 p.228.
15. Kurup, K.K.N., *Agrarian struggles in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1989, p.16.
16. Gough, Kathleen, "Peasant Resistance and Revolt in South India" in A.R. Desai (Ed.) *Peasant Struggles in India*, Delhi, 1979, p.724.
17. *Ibid*, pp.724-725.
18. *The Madras Plantation Labour Act*, 1903, Government of Madras, Madras, 1903.
19. Agriculture Statistics 1897-1902, Madras, 1902, p. 340.
20. Menon, Dilip M., n.5, p.23.
21. *The Madras Estate Land Act 1908*, Government of Madras.

# **AGRAHARAM HOUSES IN KANCHIPURAM**

**J. SUMATHI**

*Research scholar*

*C.P.R Indological research institute*

*Affiliated to Madras University*

South Indian cities have mostly grown around temples, and where trade and commerce flourish, civilization spreads, and cities in the real sense of the word naturally evolve. Thus, the development of cities around a temple has been the chief factor in the evolution of city life.

The great poetess Avvaiyar stated a city should not be developed without a proper temple or place of worship (*kovil illa ooril kudi irukka vendam*). The existence of a temple implies sanctity and hence sanitation of the surroundings, assured



*Seven Agraharam houses in Rengarajan Street  
in Kanchipuram*

water supply, a flower garden, a modest dairy for supplying milk to the temple, and other essentials of life<sup>1</sup>.

In the Tamil country as in the rest of India, the institution of caste has been responsible for many social customs and habits. The old houses are also unique in the attention that has been paid to the most private of spaces. The outer facades or elevation did not seek to impress through being different from the others<sup>2</sup>. The traditional housing style is not just an architectural style, but it is a way of life. It is basically based on the cultural and social needs of individuals as well as that of the community.

Traditional architectural styles were often shaped by parameters such as climate, occupation and the prevailing socio-economic and socio-cultural factors. Thus the *agrahâram*, a word of Sanskrit origin representing a settlement comprising of two rows of houses facing each other built around the streets of the temple complex evolved to facilitate the work and lifestyle of a Tamil Brahmin household. Typically, the *agrahâram* houses developed around temple tanks where the residents engaged in the traditional occupation of being *archakas* to perform temple rituals, doing *paurohityam* (practising priesthood) and disseminating the knowledge of the *Vedas*<sup>3</sup>.

Houses in the area of Rengarajan Street in Kanchipuram with the Varadharaja Perumal temple as the focal point are perhaps some of the best examples of the *agrahâram* style which are found in the town even today.

This street is popularly known as Seven House Street (*Yelu veedu theru*). On this street, the houses are joined together<sup>4</sup>. These seven houses were constructed in 1765 and this land was donated by Rengarajan, a Brahmin, for Brahmin families exclusively. The condition was that the property could only be



sold to another Brahmin, thus ensuring that the entire street remained exclusively for Brahmins.

## Architectural features of the seven houses

The architectural features of these seven houses are typical examples of the *agrahâram* or Brahmin house. Each individual house portion was known as *kattu*.

The first *kattu* or entrance has two portions, the first half being a space open to the sky and the second covered to take care of the rain and the hot sun. The second portion of the first *kattu* has the traditional *thinnai*. This *thinnai* is divided by a passage for entry into the house. The sloping roof over the *thinnai* is covered with semi-circular clay tiles (*nâttu odu or cup tiles*) on thin wooden cross beams. It keeps the place cool. This is an extension of the roof of the interior. This roof always slopes towards the road and is supported by short wooden columns. There are two *mâda pirais* in the front wall of the house where *vilakku* (lighted lamps) are kept in the evenings.

The *thinnai* is used for several purposes nowadays. But in olden days the *thinnai* was used for educational purposes. This education system is popularly called as *thinnai pallikudam*. According to the people living in these houses, a person named Vithvan Elango Rengachari Swamy lived in one of these houses in the year 1959. He was a great Sanskrit scholar who taught lessons to the Brahmin boys of the village.

The second *kattu* consists of a passage to the main house along with a small *thinnai*. This place is called *nadai*.

This *thinnai* is generally used in the rainy season when people of the house are not able to sit outside.

The third *kattu* consists of an open courtyard (*nadu mitham*). The *mitham* or *mutram* is open to the sky. The *mitham* was once an intrinsic part of every traditional home and served both a social need and the more immediate need of ventilation<sup>5</sup> of the hall and of the bedroom. The *mitham* is surrounded by huge stone pillars. The walls of the house were built with sand and limestone and were devoid of any metal. The use of natural substances and baked clay floors ensured that the house always remained cool. All these interior spaces are covered by the roof which is designed to slope towards the central courtyard on three sides. It rests on teak wood beams located along the edges of the open courtyard. There is a hole at one corner of the courtyard for collecting rain water, covered with a stone *jalli*. This hole has channels that lead the water to the well at the backyard of the house. The channel that connects the well is made of limestone.

The fourth *kattu* consists of a *pooja* room adjoining the kitchen, along with the dining room. This portion is also called *samayal kattu*. Inside the kitchen there is a small room which is used as a storeroom.

The fifth *kattu* is earmarked for bath and toilet. It is an open backyard. In the past, toilets were not kept inside the house and were kept far away from the main building. The fifth *kattu* also contains a small *thinnai* – (*pin kattu thinnai*) and a place for boiling water (*venneer aduppu*) which is also a common sight in the backyard.

The sixth *kattu* ('*Kollai*') is the backyard where the *kinaru* or well is located as a water source and a place for washing of clothes. Cleaning of utensils is also done here. There is also a separate place for a cow shed in the backyard which has a low semi-circular clay tiled roof. The cow shed is called *Mattu Thozhuvam*.

At the back of these seven houses a common pond or *kulam* is found, used for mourning rites and not for the purpose of bathing.

The above mentioned seven houses are typical of the *agrahâram* houses.

Apart from these houses some Brahmin houses with a richer architectural style are found in Kanchipuram. For example, Lingappan Street in Kanchipuram near the Ekambareshwarar temple complex comprises of wealthy Brahmin houses. This type of architecture is an amalgamation of the Nayak style and colonial style of architecture. This house consists of a two story building. The special feature of this house is the *kalyanakoodam* and a high ceiling of Madras terrace. The high ceiling causes the warm air to go up easily. There are windows with small wooden doors that allow plenty of light and air. This *kalyanakoodam* is surrounded by small rooms which are utilized for multiple purposes.

The roof of a normal *agrahâram* house is supported by teak wooden beams. In contrast to the normal *agrahâram* house whose roof consists of tiles, the houses in Lingappan Street are provided with a flat Madras terrace. In the Lingappan street house the main central hall has been built to a considerable height. To ensure proper light and ventilation, windows have been

provided on all four sides at the level of the first floor. In the past, marriages and important functions were conducted in the main central hall. The floor of this hall is made up of red-oxide. This powder is mixed with white cement and applied to the floor. This method is called *kaaviida*<sup>6</sup>.

In this house only four tall wooden pillars support the roof of the main central hall. These types of supporting pillars are also found in the Thirumalai Nayak palace at Madurai and the Sarfoji Mahal at Thanjavur. They are thick at the base and tapering towards the roof. The rest of the house consists of the normal courtyard, verandah, kitchen and *pooja* room. The open verandah, kitchen and *pooja* room are covered by a sloping roof made of semi-circular clay tiles or *nāttu odu* on thin wooden cross beams, as in the *agrahāram* houses. On the terrace, there is a tiny room called the *machil*. It is a good place for an afternoon siesta. The borders of the parapet walls on the terrace are similar to fort walls. In fact except for the additional front *koodam* used by the men, the old *agrahāram* design is maintained for the *pin kattu* (back quarters) which was occupied by the women and children. Though there are similarities found between the two streets of houses, there are some differences in the style of architecture.

Even now in the great city of Kanchipuram, some Brahmins live in the traditional *agrahāram* houses. In the olden days traditional houses had a unique style and ecological tradition. But nowadays we find that the traditional houses are not well maintained. With rising socio-economic standards, increasing affordability, more global education, increased mobility and the disintegration of the joint family system, owners of the ancient *agrahāram* style houses seem to be in a hurry to encash their property and move to more 'modern' dwellings.

## References

1. Venkatrama Ayer, C.P. *Town planning in ancient Deccan*, Mittal Publication, New Delhi. 1987, p-7.
2. *Inside Outside*, August/September, 1987, p-105.
3. Shreya Ramnath, “The changing face of the old *Agrahāram* house” <http://firstterm.acjnewsline.org/upload%20for%20group%20D/Architecture/Agrahāram%20style%20-%20Shreya.htm> (accessed august 28, 2011)
4. Francoise Boudignon, *A Pilgrimage in South India in 1845: Thiruvannamalai*, Sri Ramana kshetra-Kanvashrama Trust, Thiruvannamalai, 1995, p-44.
5. *Inside Outside*, November 1997, p-177.
6. “Red-oxide floors have their charm, *The Hindu*, Nov 19, 2005.

# **BUCKINGHAM CANAL – A CASE STUDY**

**A. MUNUSWAMY**

*Ph.D. Research Scholar*

*Dept. of Indian History, University of Madras  
Chennai*

## **Introduction**

Grenville Richard Plantagenet Campbell Temple Nugent Brydges Chands, the third Duke of Buckingham and Chandos ( 1823 – 1889) was the Governor of Madras Presidency from 1875 to 1880<sup>1</sup>. He succeeded William K. Robinson who had been the acting Governor of the Presidency for six months after a vacuum created due to the death of Lord Hobart<sup>2</sup>. The Governorship of the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos was marked by an intensively severe famine that raged in South India in 1876 and 1877 and continued in 1878 also. However, as the Duke had seen much of parliamentary and political life before, and when he succeeded as Governor, he was able to energetically grapple with the problem of the terrible famine because of which, he also became an idol of the masses<sup>3</sup>. However, he was an able man, blunt in manners and casual in dress and he cared nothing for state ceremonies. He was practical and he examined personally all details of administration, sometimes to the annoyance and confusion of the people in charge. His theory of personal inspection was excellent and he found favour with exalted personages of higher rank than Dukes; but it led to curious experiences, as he discovered on more than one occasion, and embarrassment to the staff whose duties kept them in close attendance<sup>4</sup>.

The Duke used no ceremony towards his subordinates. For all his eccentricities he made an excellent Governor, sparing himself no pains to gain all sorts of knowledge connected with his duties and responsibilities and seeing to the best of his ability that laws and regulations were properly carried out<sup>5</sup>. This paper is an attempt to remember one of the most necessary and worthwhile constructions of the British in the erstwhile Madras Presidency, the Buckingham Canal, during his period.

## **The Buckingham Canal**

The Buckingham Canal in Madras is just two parts of a four – part canal that was one of the longest in the country<sup>6</sup>. Earlier, it was a 420 KM long salt water navigation canal running parallel to the Coromandel Coast of South India from Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh to Villupuram District in Tamil Nadu. The Canal connects most of the natural backwaters – Elumpur river and Poonamalli river or Triplicane River along the coast up to the port of Madras. It was constructed by the British Raj, and was an important waterway during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries<sup>7</sup>. Once upon a time, the area covered by Madras today was divided into four by these rivers. Now all these have turned to Cooum rivers or channels. Among the three rivers and a canal, the canal deserves special mention. The study of the Buckingham canal is divided into four parts 1. Construction of the Canal, 2. Course of the Canal, 3. Decline in usage and 4. Effects of the Tsunami.

## **The Construction of the Canal**

The Gazetteers of India, Tamil Nadu State (Kancheepuram and Thiruvallur District) explain that “there were two canals in

the Chengalput district in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and they were Cochrane's canal, named after the constructor who undertook the completion of the canal which extended upto Peddaganjam in Andhra Pradesh starting from the Palar river, the Cooum river connecting the East coast canal, Pappanchavadi in former Chengalpattu District and the mouth of the river Palar<sup>8</sup>. The Canal is one of the earliest engineering feats of the nineteenth century. The elevation of the canal was begun as early as 1801<sup>9</sup>. Though the first segment of the canal was constructed in 1806, from Madras north to Ennore, it was completed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Basil Ecoti Cochrane who excavated what was left of the North River to create a navigable canal upto Durga Raya Patnam (Armagon of Francis Day's revered memory) near Nellore<sup>10</sup>. Cochrane's feat involved relinking with and depending on the North River, a considerable achievement that was not recognised till many years later<sup>11</sup>. In fact, the Second Clive as he was called, derived all the initial recognition, and the work in the initial stages was deemed as the work on the 'Clive Canal!' Cochrane eventually got his due, when the canal was opened in 1806, and in the years that followed, Cochrane Canal was gradually extended upto Peddaganjam where it linked the Canals of the Krishna and Godavari deltas<sup>12</sup>. The Buckingham Canal was constructed and connected with different channels in different years. When it was constructed for the first time in 1806, the purpose was navigation. But, when the Madras Presidency was under the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, the Canal was again constructed and extended. At this time the purpose of its construction was purely famine relief. So the period of construction of the Canal can be divided into three parts. They are from 1801 to 1883 which was considered as the first period; from 1883 to 1891 was the second period and the period from 1892 to 1897 was the last period in the construction of the Canal.



## **The First Period - Buckingham Canal for Navigational Purpose 1801 – 1883**

The history of the Buckingham Canal, which was an early test of engineering in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, dates back to 1801. However, prior to the famine of 1876 – 1878, the expenditure incurred for its maintenance was only about five and half lakhs of rupees<sup>13</sup>. As early as 1806, the navigable canal functioned as a small and shallow backwater from Madras northwards to Ennore lake. It was constructed by a private individual, Mr. Basil Cochrane, and was, therefore, known as “Cochrane’s Canal”. The extension of this short length of 11 miles of the canal was soon afterwards connected to the Pulicat Lake, thus opening up navigation to small craft to a distance of 25 miles north of Madras<sup>14</sup>. It greatly facilitated the importation of charcoal, firewood, vegetables and other articles of daily consumption to the Presidency markets<sup>15</sup>.

In 1837, when the Canal was taken over by the Government, it was in a very bad condition because the bed was much silted and navigation was practicable only for very small craft, that too after frequent silt clearances<sup>16</sup>. This unsatisfactory state continued till 1852 when the construction of the proper canal was first taken up earnestly and extensive improvements and further completion of the canal were proposed. In 1854, the canal was further extended, ultimately reaching 315 km north of Madras to Vijayawada on the Krishna river in Andhra Pradesh, and 103 km south of Madras to Marakanam in Tamilnadu<sup>17</sup>. Also in the same year in 1854, the Shadayankuppam lock was built, seven miles north of Madras with the object of keeping up the water level in the Canal and Cooum river high during the year when the sea - bar at Ennore was open, thus covering

with water, the offensive sewage laden banks and shoals of the Cooum River<sup>18</sup>.

In 1857, the Canal was extended to Durgarayapatnam, 69 miles north of Madras, by means of excavated cuts joining the backwaters together. By this time an entirely new canal had also been excavated on the same principle of joining the backwaters together from the Adyar river in the town of Madras southwards to Sadras, a total length of 35 miles<sup>19</sup>. It had later acquired the name East Coast Canal and remained with the same name and then it was finally named the Buckingham Canal.

In 1876, the East Coast Canal was extended from Durgarayapatnam to Krishnapatnam, 92 miles north of Madras thereby placing Madras in communication with the important town of Nellore, connecting a short length of road between Krishnapatnam and Nellore<sup>20</sup>. But there took place a terrible event in South India during this time and that was the famine of 1876-78. During the year 1875, the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos took over as Governor and almost immediately as indicated earlier, was faced with one of South India's worst famines that lasted from 1875 to 1878. North Arcot and Chengalput were among the worst – affected districts, though stock piling of grain in Madras enabled the city to escape the brunt of the disaster. To help the people during this crisis, the Duke put them to work on relief projects. And the result was the digging of an eight kilometer stretch of canal that linked the Adyar River with the Cooum near its mouth, just behind the present Madras University buildings. Nearly Rs. 30 Lakhs (over 2/3 of it was on labour) were spent on this famine relief work during 1877 – 78<sup>21</sup>.

By 1882, this canal was extended to link the South Coast and the East Coast Canal, in effect, linking Marakanam in the

south, via the Cochrane canal, with Kakinada in Andhra, a distance of over 400 miles. The urban stretch of this water way was fittingly called the Buckingham Canal, but inevitably, the entire system, from the southern most point to the link with the Andhra deltaic system at Peddaganjam, 280 miles from Madras was bestowed with the name of the Duke Cochrane who was forgotten again<sup>22</sup>.

The reason for the further construction during 1876 was the famine in the Presidency which lasted till 1878. The construction of the Canal was a great relief to the masses. Thus, for resolving the bad effects, the then Governor, Buckingham formed a Public Department for famine relief. Among this, the most important was famine administration and he formed a Famine Council also.

#### **(a) Famine and further construction of the Canal for Irrigational Purposes.**

The most acute and extensive famine that proved too costly for the Presidency occurred between 1876 and 1878. The entire area between the Krishna river and Cape Comorin was affected and the distress was most severe in eight out of the twenty one districts of the Presidency. The total area affected was 8300 square miles with a population of nearly 20 million<sup>23</sup>.

Like most wide-spread famines, the famine of 1876 – 78 was caused by drought but not by the drought of a single season or of a single year. The harvest of 1874 had been indifferent, especially in the Ceded Districts. In 1876, the South – West Monsoon on which the eastern districts were largely dependent on the rains proved deficient; and the North – East monsoon on which the eastern districts almost entirely relied for their cultivation failed still more<sup>24</sup>.

As mentioned above, during this time, the Duke of Buckingham and Chandos, was the Governor of the Presidency<sup>25</sup>. Before the close of the Great Madras famine of 1876-78, a Famine Commission was appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the question for the whole of the Presidency. The Governor was unfamiliar with the people and country and with Indian aspects. So, the Governor appointed W.R. Robinson and R.B. Ellis to manage the famine related unrest in the province. Besides, W.R. Robinson knew the country most thoroughly because as Inspector-General of Police, he had visited every part of the Presidency and was known to possess great personal sympathy for Indians. R.B. Ellis was a civilian of much experience in Southern India, a man of wide experience and action and, generally, he was able to take quick decisions in a particular situation<sup>26</sup>. He and other officials were the men who had to face and fight the calamity which fell upon the Presidency in the autumn of 1876.

### **(b) The Famine Department**

The canal, as indicated earlier, is one of the earliest engineering feats of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The excavation of the canal began in 1801. However, prior to the famine of 1876-78, the expenditure on it was only about five and half lakhs of rupees<sup>27</sup>. During the famine, nearly thirty lakhs of rupees were spent on the work of which about 22 lakhs represented the normal value of labour alone<sup>28</sup>.

The Committee which was formed at the time of the famine was called the Famine Department. This department decided about one large work namely the extension of the East Coast Canal popularly known as Buckingham Canal and this was to

be undertaken as a famine relief work<sup>29</sup>. The Buckingham Canal and its construction acquired a great momentum only during its excavation as a famine relief work<sup>30</sup>.

To give employment to the distressed famine - stricken people of Madras it was resolved to work on the long projected junction canal between the Cooum and the Adyar rivers, an important link in the East Coast Canal. Communications could not be executed in previous years for lack of necessary funds but its necessity had been strongly advocated by Sir Arthur Cotton and other able engineers. Its construction, it was felt, would remove the obstructions that existed in a line of inland navigation which, when completed, would connect Godavari, Krishna and the numerous navigable canals, with the Nellore, Madras, Chengalput and the South Arcot Districts<sup>31</sup>.

The particular importance of the Buckingham Canal during the famine lies in the fact that it was a source of income and relief to the famine stricken people. Able bodied persons who were employed in the construction of the canal were paid wages and this proved to be a “dual benefit” for the Government which got plenty of labour for the construction of the Canal and for the people for whom wages for work done meant that they could buy food during the famine. The employment opportunities given to able bodied persons gave some good relief to the famine stricken people who had been struggling for their bread<sup>32</sup>.

Besides, piracy played an important role in the construction of the Buckingham Canal. The Bay of Bengal was crowded with a number of pirates, who used to plunder the merchant ships. This piracy sowed panic in the minds of the sailors and their ships were subjected to attack at any time. Above all, frequent famines and the subsequent food shortage caused

intolerable and immeasurable hardship to the ships which were sailing on the Bay of Bengal. Every year considerable number of ships were damaged by cyclones. In order to avoid all these hardships the East India Company began to find the ways and means to prevent such hardships. The outcome was the construction of the Buckingham Canal which was started in 1802 and which was completed in 1892<sup>33</sup>.

## **II. Period between 1883 and 1891**

The second period of the history of the canal comprises 9 years from 1883 to 1891. Some modification was done in this period in the canal and the modification course was started in 1883.

From long experience and particularly from the experience of severe cyclones that struck the Coromandel Coast in 1879, it became apparent that it was a positive disadvantage of the Canal being aligned through shallow backwaters and that the line had, in many parts, been taken far too near the sea, and was in consequence, subject to damage from ordinary high tides and inundation from storm waves. Thus, in May and November 1879 cyclones occurred along the canal line because of succeeding high tides that damaged the canal greatly and entirely stopping navigation. Hence, a decision was taken to build flood gates. During the cyclones, the rivers and backwaters rose to a very high level and the canal also rose proportionately. After the cyclone, the canal was found to be very heavily silted. Between the occurrences of those cyclones of 1879 and 1883, the quantity of silt annually deposited in the canal was subjected to much discussion. Thus, it was decided in 1883 to build flood gates

across the canal at its junction with each river or backwater passing a considerable volume of land floods to the sea<sup>34</sup>.

As per this plan, the first regular design for the construction of the whole canal was accordingly made in 1883<sup>35</sup>. The new design of the canal was suitable (i) for pushing back the canal water, which had been near the sea and for removing it out of the backwaters (ii) for embanking the canal on its eastern side so as to keep out the storm waves from the sea as well as on its western side, so as to exclude backwater floods and turn the river spills and drainage into the main rivers and finally (iii) for constructing of an embankment on the eastern side of the canal; high masonry sluiced with outlets with swing shutters and low level silts intended to act as sluiced supplements to the flood gates for discharging gross drainage from the canal and situated as a rule in proximity to the flood gates<sup>36</sup>.

In the first two periods, the reason for the construction and extension of the canal was for navigational purposes, trade and famine relief. But there were changes that took place in the third period. During the third period, the most highlighted problem of the canal was the severe flood which upto now Madras faced. But, the construction of the canal saved the city from many such disasters.

### **The Third period 1892 - 1897**

During the year 1892, the canal had been provided generally with a high eastern embankment intended to check the advance of a storm wave. During this period, in accordance with the final design, a large number of old flood gates had been converted into locks and, consequently, several new locks have also been

built; openings to the sea had been made and long surplus escapes had been formed at a comparatively small cost on the east bank of the canal. Improvement to banks, beams and slopes were carried out and various drainage channels, and works necessary to minimize damage from river spills were also completed.

The canal was ordinarily fit for navigation and for traffic of goods by boats from 5 to 30 tonnes throughout the year. With the coming of the Railways, the diversion of traffic, deliberately led gradually to the neglect of the canal and to a silted up condition in the absence of proper maintenance. It then contributed to still further deterioration of the Canal System.

## II. Course of the Canal

The Canal runs approximately 1 km away from the coastline. The Cooum river connects the canal to the Bay of Bengal in the center of Madras<sup>37</sup>. The portion of the Cooum is known as the North Buckingham Canal, and the portion south of the Cooum as the South Buckingham Canal. It has a total length of 420 km of which 163 km is in Tamil Nadu and the remaining 257 kms, in Andhra Pradesh. Approximately 31 kms length of Canal is within the city limits of Madras<sup>38</sup>.

The Canal was formerly used to convey goods up and down the coast to Madras. Now the canal is not suitable for transportation as it is very shallow and, in many places, it is broken. It is used as a drainage canal<sup>39</sup>. The cyclones of 1965 / 1966 and 1976 damaged the canal, and it is presently little used and no longer maintained. After the calamity, the canal area is being used for erecting the pillars of the new elevated Metro – Rail



service. To all intents and purposes, the urban stretch of the canal has been lost forever, no matter the lip service being paid to new promises of another look being taken at the canal in the light of ever rising fuel prices<sup>40</sup>.

Within the City of Madras, the canal is badly polluted from sewage and effluents from industries and pumping stations. The silting of the canal has left the water stagnant, creating an ideal habitation for malarial mosquitos. The North Madras Thermal Power station (NMTP) discharges hot water and fly ash into the canal as well. Buckingham Canal steered the rainwater overflow away from the heart of the city<sup>41</sup>. Unfortunately in recent years, much of the canal has been used as the route of the elevated Mass Rapid Transport System (MRTS) of Madras City. Now a days, when there are heavy rains, the city remains flooded till the water evaporates in the sunlight<sup>42</sup>.

## Effects

Dr. B. Ramalingeswara Rao first identified the buffer zone action of Buckingham Canal when he visited areas of 300 km along the coast line and he recommended to the Government to renovate the same to mitigate the “*Tsunami*” hazard in future<sup>43</sup>. Further, Ramalingeswara Rao reported as follows:

During the 2004 Indian Ocean *Tsunami*, the Buckingham anal acted as a buffer zone and regulated the *tsunami* waves on the coastal region over nearly 310 km from Pedda Ganjam to Madras. It was filled with *tsunami* water, which overflowed at a few places and receded back to the sea within 10 to 15 minutes<sup>44</sup>. This helped to save the lives of several fishermen, especially in coastal Andra Pradesh and the port of Madras City

and also helped in clearing the aquaculture debris. The natural growth of vegetation on either side of the Canal has had an effect in “*tsunami*” mitigation; for example in Vakadu Mandal at villages like Pudukuppam, Srinivasapuram and Tudipalam, the damages were minimal<sup>45</sup>.

Ramalingeswara Rao had further made an assessment on the extension of the Buckingham Canal upto Vedaranyam in order to protect the Tamil Nadu coast from the fury of “*Tsunami*” in future and the maximum magnitude M 8.5 may occur in future in Sumatra because of its continuous subduction activity<sup>46</sup>. In this way, the Buckingham Canal has contributed its beneficial effects over the areas over which it flows.

## Conclusion

The Buckingham Canal was built in 1806, as a tribute to the Queen of England, by the English Company’s administrators. It served as a major channel for transportation for over a century. But the cyclone of 1965 - 1966, damaged the use of the canal. Trade virtually ceased after the 1976 Cyclone. The locks on both the south Buckingham Canal and the North Buckingham Canal had fallen into disuse and none of them is operational. Ever since then, industrial pollution, sewage and a lot of other scrap have been poured thus polluting it more.

Once this canal was Madras’s lifeline for economic activity and now it is reduced to a sickly stretch of stagnant water and pollution. Buckingham Canal might well regain its past glory if proper steps are taken. With the passing of the National Waterways Bill in Parliament recently, the much awaited revival of the more than two centuries old channel falling under the Kakinada –

Puducherry National Waterway project funded by the Centre, has gained momentum. In the first place, a 50 km stretch from Muttukadu Creek to Edaiyur Creek near Kalpakkam part of the south Buckingham Canal would be dredged and cleaned according to the guidelines used by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI). Sources said that the canal could be revived at an estimated cost of Rs. 450 – 500 crores and the first phase costing about Rs. 50 crores began in February 2009. The Government of Tamil Nadu has invited the Singapore Government's representatives to study the cleaning and using of the Cooum as they had experimented with such programmes with success in their country.

The present efforts to clean up the Buckingham Canal, it is hoped, will bring several benefits to the areas around it in Tamil Nadu. It remains as the great contribution of British rule in India since it was a systematically constructed waterway in the East coast region of South India for economic and transportation activity in the Northern part of the then Madras Presidency.

## References

1. Muthiah, S., *Madras Rediscovered: A Historical Guide to looking around*, East West Publication, London, 2002, p.150.
2. *Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency, 1875 – 76*, Vol.I, The Government of Madras, The Government Press, 1887, p. 2.
3. Srinivasachari, C.S., *History of the City of Madras*, P. Varadachary and Company, Madras, 1939, p. 226.
4. Leslie Stephen and Sidney Zee, *Dictionary of National Biography*, Vol. VIII, Oxford University Press, London, 1917, p.574.

5. Frank Penny, *On the Coromandel Coast*, Smith Elder and Company, London, 1908, p. 35.
6. Muthiah, S., *Op.Cit*, p.150.
7. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckinghamcanal>
8. Gopalakrishnan, M., (Ed.), *Gazetteer of India, Tamil Nadu State, Kancheepuram and Tiruvallur Districts*, Government of Tamil Nadu Press, Vol. I, 2000, p.2
9. Russel, S., *History of the Buckingham Canal Project*, Government Press, Madras, 1898, p.40.
10. *Dinamani Kadir* (Tamil), 18<sup>th</sup> October 1987, p.41.
11. Muthiah, S., *Op.Cit*, p.150.
12. Russel, S., *Op.Cit*.
13. Maclean, C.D., *Manual of the Administration of the Madras Presidency*, Vol. I, Government Press, Madras, 1885, p.394.
14. Chopra, P.N., (Ed.), *The Gazetteer of India Vol . III*, Department of Culture, Ministry of Education and Social welfare, New Delhi, 1975, p.751.
15. Baliga, B.S., *Studies in Madras Administration*, Vol.I, Government of Madras, Madras, 1960, p.197.
16. P.N. Chopra, *Op.cit*, p. 752.
17. *Ibid.*,
18. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckinghamcanal/canals in india](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckinghamcanal/canals%20in%20india)
19. Baliga, B.S., *Op.cit*, p.198.
20. Muthiah, S., *Op.Cit*, p.154.
21. P.N. Chopra, *Op.cit*, p.752.
22. Muthiah, S., *Op.Cit*, p.150.
23. Maclean. C.D., *Op.cit*, Vol II, p.399.
24. Saroja Sundararajan, *Madras Presidency in Pre – Gandhian Era, A Historical perspective 1884 – 1915*, Lalitha Publications, Pondicherry, 1977, p.200.
25. Hunter, W.W., *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. IX, Trubner & Co., London, 1886 p.37.
26. Maclean. C.D., (Ed.), *Op.cit*, Vol I, p.300.
27. *Ibid*, p.301

28. William Digby, the *Famine Campaign in Southern India 1876 – 78*, Vol I, Longmans Green & Co. London, 1878, pp.3 - 4.
29. Maclean, C.D., *Op.cit*, pp.302 - 303.
30. William Digby, *Op.cit*, pp. 26- 27.
31. *Report on the Administration of the Madras Presidency, 1876 – 77*, E. Keys Government Press, Madras, 1877, p.66.
32. Krishna, Nanditha , *Madras – Chennai*, Prodigy Books, Madras, 2009, p.16.
33. C.S. Srinivasachari, *Op.cit.*, p.268.
34. *Report on the Administration of the Public works Department and Roads in General in Madras Presidency*, Vol. I, Government press, 1876 – 77, p.67.
35. Maclean, C.D., *Op.cit*, Vol II, pp.394 - 395.
36. Srinivasachari, C.S., *Op.cit.*, p.269.
37. Hunter, W.W., *Op.cit.*, p.38.
38. Baliga, B. S., *Op.cit.*, p.9.
39. Marshall, D.E., *A Hand Book of Directions to the Port in the Presidency of Madras and Ceylon*, IV Edition, Government Press, Madras, 1883, p.55.
40. William Digby, *Op.cit*, pp.6 - 8.
41. Krishna, Nanditha, *Op.cit.*, p.15.
42. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buckinghamcanal> pp.1 - 2.
43. Gopalakrishnan, M., *Op.cit.*, p.12.
44. Muthiah, S., *Op.Cit*, p.151.
45. Ibid.,
46. Krishna, Nanditha., *Op.cit.*, pp.16 - 17.
47. “Buckingham Canal Buffered Tsunami fury”, *The Hindu*, August, 11, 2005.
48. “*The desecrated link*” *The Hindu*, September 23, 2005.
49. Ramalingeswara Rao, . B., *Buckingham Canal and Tsunami of 26.December 2004*. Current Service Vol. 89, pp.12 - 13.
50. *Buckingham Canal Buffered Tsunami fury*, *Op.cit.*,

# **CHRISTIANITY IN THE PRINCELY STATE OF MYSORE - 1831 - 1947**

**Sr. ANN MARY**

*Lecturer in History, Department of History,  
Teresian College, Mysore.*

The origin of Christianity in India has been the subject of controversy because valid and reliable dates about early Christianity in India are not historically ascertainable. But a small section of the people have a strong belief that the beginning of Christianity in India dates back to the first century A.D. In the first century A.D., merchants of the Roman empire regularly set sail from the ports of Egypt, down the Arabian Sea to Malabar where they exchanged Roman gold coins and the products of the Mediterranean World for Indian textiles, pearls and spices. St. Thomas, one of Jesus's chosen Apostles might have reached India on such a merchant ship. Pothacarnury, a Catholic Arch Bishop of Bangalore made a strong claim that St. Thomas, the Apostle brought Christianity to our country in 52 A.D.

The Medieval India Church is the Church of the west that is the period between late antiquity about 600 A.D. and the arrival of the Portuguese in 1498 A.D. The first European Christian missionary of this period to come to India was Fr. John of Monte Corvine, an Italian Franciscan. He arrived in 1291 A.D. on his way to China and he started his missionary activities in India. Another Franciscan missionary who came to India was Friar John Marignolly, who erected a marble cross at Cape Comorin. (Kaniyakumari)

Since the latter half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Franciscan and Dominican missionaries entered the country and established

themselves at centres like Quilon and Cranganore. One of the most notable of these missionaries was the French Dominican Friar Jourdain De Sevrac. In 1329, Pope John XXII appointed Jourdain as Bishop of Quilon. Quilon was the first diocese in the Indies ever established by the Vatican.

The modern expansion of Christianity in India began with the arrival of the Portuguese, that is from 1498 onwards on the Malabar coast. This began with the arrival of Vasco Da Gama at Calicut. The Portuguese arrival in Asia was not only the beginning of Western domination in the political field but also opened a chapter in the expansion of Christianity. By 1534, they opened trading stations in Diu, Chaul, Bassein, Salsette, Calicut, Cochin and Quilon in the west; Tuticorin and Colombo in the south. Nagapatnam and Mylapore on the Coromandel coast, and Chittagong in the delta of the Ganges.

The real expansion of Christianity begins with the arrival of St. Francis Xavier and Fr. Robert de Nobili. St. Francis Xavier, the Apostle of India and the patron of missions began his great missionary work in India in 1542. He launched his activities on the Indian soil and his efforts set a new direction in the sphere of Indian life, thought and culture.

By 1552, Christianity made significant progress and so the Vatican raised Goa to a Diocese in 1534. A Franciscan Friar, Joao d' Albuquerque was made the first Bishop of Goa, It was he who welcomed the first Jesuits. Now, how did these Jesuits appear in the stage of History? There is a story behind it.

One of the great events that heralded the beginning of the modern age was the Reformation. The Reformation was primarily a great religious upheaval that took place in Europe during the

16<sup>th</sup> century. The 16<sup>th</sup> century witnessed large sections of Christians, breaking away from the Church of Rome and establishing different Churches of their own. To combat the errors, Pope Paul II called a general council in which doctrinal errors were condemned and Catholic teaching was reaffirmed. The Pope insisted on the reformation from religious indifference to a fervent Christian living. This is called the famous Counter Reformation. During this time, new religious orders came to combat heresy, The most important among them were the Capuchins and the Jesuits. The Capuchins together with the Jesuits, were the most effective preachers and missionaries of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

As missionaries, the Jesuits displayed remarkable talent, a zealous attitude, daring, and persistence. They could be found widely dispersed in order to spread the message of Jesus Christ. They were not deterred by difficulties created by travel, climate, difficult living conditions and loneliness. The Jesuits left Europe for various places with the intention of strengthening Christianity. That is how the Jesuits landed in India too.

It would be very interesting to know the origin of Christianity in Mysore. From the quotation of Mgr. Laouenan, Christianity was introduced in Mysore by the Dominicans around 1325. The Dominicans were followed by the Franciscans in 1587. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Jesuits came to the Kingdom of Mysore.

The Jesuits founded two mission stations: one in the kingdom of Mysore and the other was a part of the Karnatic Province. At the time of the first foundation, the Kingdom of Mysore extended upto Darapuram, but in breadth it ended about 10 miles to the west of Bangalore. This town and its surrounding territory were annexed to the kingdom of Mysore in 1687 when Chikka Deva Rajah, the then Rajah of Mysore, purchased Bangalore



for 3 lakhs of rupees from Kadim Khan, the general of the Emperor Aurangzeb.

The Jesuit Fathers seem to have followed the Cauvery upstream to Seringapatam (Srirangapatna) which was the capital of the Kingdom from 1610 to 1799. From the capital, they spread the teachings of Christ to the north and the west of the Kingdom. The mission station of the period was Palhally, Domahally, Gadanahally and Settihally. In the taluk of Chanarayapatna is situated the mission station of Mudala Basapura.

The Society of Jesus was suppressed in 1773 by Pope Clement XIV. At the suggestion of the secretary of the propaganda Fide Mgr. Borgia, the then Pope, Pius VI gave the new responsibility of Mysore to the Paris Society of Foreign Missions in 1776. *Propaganda Fide* means propagation of faith. It was established by Pope Gregory XIV on Jan 12, 1622.

The first Superior of this mission was Brigot. The ex Jesuits amalgamated themselves with the MEP. In 1792, one of the most illustrious priests of the Paris Foreign Mission Society came to Srirangapatnam. He was none other than Abbe Dubois.

Jean Antoine Dubois left France in 1792 for Puducherry. As soon as he arrived, he realized that in order to have access to the people, it was necessary to live according to their customs. Dubois succeeded well in his praise-worthy project. He travelled throughout the Kingdom as a brave missionary and took extreme care for the upliftment of the people especially in healthcare. He got the support of Colonel Wellesley, the Governor of the town, whose protection was essential for the success of his missionary work. At Ganjam, a Church was constructed in the year 1800. He travelled throughout the country and built many churches in Mysore, Coimbatore and Dharmapuri.

Another work which brought credit to the missionary was the introduction of vaccination. Small Pox was causing great havoc among the population of Mysore. In 1726, Chamaraja Wodeyar was himself a victim of this epidemic. He made known to the Government the great advantage of vaccination.

All these activities could not prevent the great missionary from studying with shrewdness and accuracy the manners, customs, and the religions of the Indians. He gathered the fruits of his studies in a famous book which is still today one of the most accurate and complete on this subject. Its title is "*Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*".

After Abbe Dubois, the most distinguished apostle of Mysore was Bishop Charabonnaux. He came to India as a missionary in 1830. Later, he came to Srirangapatna on 9<sup>th</sup> of June 1837. He took care of the Christian communities of Srirangapatna, Mysore, Kollegal, Hunsur, Settihalli, Shimoga, Tirthally and Harihar. He administered to the Christian community with faith, care, discipline, zeal and love.

In 1840 he added an aisle to the Church of Settihally. He built a Chapel at Fraserpet and the following year a Church at Shimoga. In spite of his illness, he was anxious to complete a Church in the town of Mysore. Krishna Raja Wodeyar was the then Rajah of Mysore. Being very liberal, he knew that the priests required a lot of money to build the Church and came forward to support him with financial gifts. During this period cholera in Mysore and Hunsur had complicated his task. With his strenuous work he managed to finish the Church of Mysore. The Church was blessed on January 1, 1843 by Charbonnaux. He was then called back to Bangalore.

The next foreign missionary who landed on the soil of Mysore was Chevalier. He came to the Mysore mission in the first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1845, Mysore became a separate mission center and so he opened a seminary in Bangalore to recruit local vocations. In 1859, he started the "*Institute of the Brothers of St. Joseph*" to disseminate education to the young. In 1873, he was appointed Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Mysore. In spite of his delicate health, he spent a lot of time visiting the large tracts of land under his pastoral care. The burden of his administration was too hard and so he chose Fr. Coadou as his pro-Vicar.

In the year 1877, a terrible famine took place all over South India. This famine brought a lot of orphaned children to the mission. In 1878, a report states that the famine had taken a very heavy toll. The government officials co-operated with the missionaries to bring relief to the population. In the town of Mysore, in 1878, an orphanage was built. It was called the "*Famine Boys Orphanage*". In the same year, another place for the destitutes was started in the Town. Exhausted by his pastoral tours, he had an attack of pleurisy on March 18, 1880 and expired on March 25, 1880. He was buried in the sanctuary of the Cathedral at the foot of St. Patrick's altar at Bangalore. In 1886 the Vicariate of Mysore was elevated to a Diocese, and its Vicar Apostolic Coadou became the 1<sup>st</sup> Bishop of Mysore and resided at Bangalore.

Until 1940, the diocese of Mysore included the entire districts of Mysore, Coorg and Kollegal. Later on, in February 13, 1940, Bangalore was separated from Mysore. The Diocese of Bangalore comprising of the districts of Bangalore, Kolar, Tumkur and Chitradurga was created by Pope Pius XI. On

Nov 16, 1963 Pope Paul VI separated three more districts viz., Chickmagalur, Hassan, Shimoga from the Mysore Diocese to form the diocese of 'Chickmagalur. The present Diocese of Mysore comprises of three districts - Mysore, Mandya and Coorg. It is surrounded by the Dioceses of Bangalore, Ooty, Calicut, Mangalore and Chickmagalur.

In 1889, new missionaries came from France and all of them worked as hard as their predecessors. 1891 was a memorable year for the State. His Highness Sri Krishnarajendra Wodeyar IV was installed as Maharaja. His Highness bestowed gifts to the orphanages and other charitable institutions.

Bishop Coadou was chosen as the last Vicar apostolic and the first Bishop of the Diocese of Mysore. He administered successfully the Christians of Settihally, Shimoga and Virajpet, gaining everywhere the reputation of being a zealous, saintly missionary. St. Joseph's College in Bangalore was started during this period. In the year 1884 Bishop Coadou decided to start the hospital of St., Martha's in Bangalore. Thus, every year a new project was proposed while the earlier ones continued to develop. On January 4, 1887, Coadou blessed the chapel of Mount Kattay near Settihally.

Bishop Coadou was succeeded by Bishop Kleiner. He left France on July 14, 1865 for the mission of Mysore. He has enriched the Mysore diocese with some of its finest Churches. In 1870, Kleiner built a beautiful Church which revealed his architectural talent. In 1872, Bishop Charbonnaux invited him to Bangalore to construct a large Church of 'St. Mary's Blackpally, He erected a Gothic Church which is still the pride of the French Foreign Mission. This was the 1<sup>st</sup> Gothic Vault in South India, Bishop Kleiner was consecrated on September 21, 1890, After

1890, the architect's genius and undertakings were pushed forward with renewed activity. He built the present St. Joseph's College with its strong foundations and massive pillars in the year 1898. The opening of St. Louis boarding House, two new Churches, one in 1901 and the other in 1902 were the last undertakings of this progressive episcopate.

The third Bishop of the Diocese of Mysore was Bishop Basle. He left for the Mysore Mission on January 2, 1875. The second famine was beginning to make itself felt and the young priest visited the camps, where the famine stricken were gathered. He served as procurator, superior of the seminary. Vicar General, Priest of St. Patrick's, Founder of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception, Administrator, Coadjutor and then as Bishop of the Diocese of Mysore from 1910-1915.

Bishop Basle constructed a number of convents and Churches in Bangalore. It was to his credit that a Home for the Aged was constructed for the first time in Bangalore. Bishop Klenier transformed the small college of St. Joseph into a vast establishment, Within a span of ten years of the Episcopate many wonderful achievements had been performed by Bishop Basle.

The fourth Bishop of the Diocese of Mysore was Bishop Teissier. He left for the Mysore Mission on October 29, 1879. In November 1880, he was sent to Shimoga. For nine years he looked after the orphans of the great famine of 1877 at Hossur near Shimoga.

In the year 1883 he was the administrator of Closepett, A year later he was at the farm of Silvaipura in the midst of orphans. In 1885, he was called to administer the district of Ganjam. Under his inspiration the place of pilgrimage of St.

Anthony of Padua developed rapidly at Dornahalli. Thousands of devotees even today go every year to this beautiful Church to fulfill their wishes.

On August 22, 1916 he was appointed Bishop of the Diocese. His episcopate was laid in a period of strain and hardship because of the Great War, Bishop Teissier was able to manage all the existing good works and the functioning of the various institutions.

The last Bishop of the French Foreign Missionary was Bishop Despatures from 1922-1942. The young and energetic priest arrived at Bangalore on September 22, 1897. On October 29, 1912 Fr. Despatures was consecrated as Bishop of Mysore.

Several important personages of the Maharaja's court assisted in the ceremony and Krishna Raja Wodeyar III sent him a telegram of congratulation. He became a friend of the Maharaja, who, on several occasions, presented gifts to the Diocese, permitting the Bishop to construct new Churches, schools and convents. Because of his financial assistance, a new bulletin called "*Doota of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*" was published in the year 1924.

Another remarkable achievement was in the year 1927. when he added one more storey to St. Martha's Hospital. St. Peter's Provincial Seminary was opened on Aug 3, 1934. In 1936, St. Philomena's Shrine at Mysore, an architectural gem was solemnly blessed. Its foundation stone was laid amidst a great concourse of people, on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1933, by Krishna Raja Wodeyar. St. Philomena's Cathedral is undoubtedly among

the grandest Churches in India. It is in Gothic style. Today, St. Philomena's Cathedral is known as St. Joseph's Cathedral. It is admired by all the tourists who visit this city of palaces. Another masterpiece of architecture, is known as St. Francis Xavier's Church. It was opened on the feast of Corpus Christi on May 26, 1932.

The time had now come for the splitting of the mission into two Dioceses namely, the Diocese of Mysore and the Diocese of Bangalore in the year of 1942. Since 1845, Bangalore had Bishop Thomas Pothacamury appointed as Bishop of the Diocese of Bangalore and the Diocese of Mysore was entrusted to Bishop Feuga.

A new order of things had set in and the history of the Diocese of Mysore began a new chapter.

From the general survey of the MEP in the Diocese of Mysore from 1776--1942, we find they worked hard, their trials were great in a country so different from their own in language, manners, customs, habits of living and climate, They worked with heroic zeal, selfless spirit and unshakable confidence.

It is certainly a great compliment to these Bishops that they spread the message of Christianity in the princely State of Mysore. The golden memories left behind by these eminent personalities are being cherished by today's generation. The fruits of their hard labour are being relished by the young and the old, the clergy and the laity. Their spirit still vibrates through the length and breadth, and every nook and corner of Mysore in the sphere of education, health care and architecture.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Primary sources

- a *Archives Missions Etrangeres de Paris.*
1. Ferroli, Do., I' Saniassi Romani, Italy, 1961.
  2. Gerbier, AM., *Histoire de la Mission du Mysore* Vol, 1, 11 (MSS), 1895,
  3. Lafrenez, J., *Precis d'histoire de la Mission de Pondicherry.* Paris, 1953,
  4. Launay, Adrien, *1.Histoire de la Missions de l'Inde,*  
*2.Histoire des Missions de l'Inde, Vol*  
*IV- Paris, 1953-*  
*3. Histoire general de la Societe des*  
*Mission Etrangeres. Paris, 1984.*  
*4. Histoire des Missions de*  
*Pondicherry, Maissour, Coimbatore de*  
*la Societe de Missions Etrangeres*  
*Vol, 11 Paris, 1848.*
  5. *Etat De la Societe Des Missions Etrangeres de Paris.*  
*1658-1994,. Order alphabetique Archives des Missions*  
*Etrangeres de Paris, 1994.*
  6. *Extrait de la Societe des Missions Etrangeres. Compute*  
*rendu des travaux de 1890, Paris. Seminaire des Missions*  
*Etrangeres 128 rue dubac, 1891.*
  7. *Extrait de la Societe des Missions Etrangeres, Compute*  
*rendu des travaux de 1915, Paris. Seminaire des Missions*  
*Etrangeres 128 rue du bac, 1916.*
  8. *Extrait de la Societe des Missions Etrangeres. Compute*  
*rendu des travaux de 1992, Paris. Seminaire des Missions*  
*Etrangeres 128 rue du bac, 1923.*
  9. *Extrait de la Societe des Missions Etrangeres memorial*  
*1961-1913. Seminaire des Missions Etrangeres 128 rue*  
*du bac, Paris.*



10. *Memorial de la Societe des Missions Etrangeres Deuxieme par-tie .1658-1913: Serninaire De Missions Etrangeres. Paris 1916.*

## Secondary Sources

### a. Published Books

1. Ferroli, D., *The Jesuits in Mysore*, Kozhikode, 1955.  
Ferroli, D., *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Vol. 1, Bangalore, 1939.  
Ferroli, D., *The Jesuits in Malabar*, Vol, 11, Bangalore, 1951.
2. Jaunet, J, *The History of Mysore Mission*, Mysore, 1997,
3. Moraes, G.M., *A History of Christianity in India*, Bombay, 1964.
4. Mundadan, AM., *History of Christianity in India*, Vol. I. Bangalore, 1989.
5. O'Mahoney, Christopher, *Church History Always*, 1975
6. Pothacamury, Thomas, *The Church in Independent India*, Bombay, 1961
7. Prakash, O.M., *St. Martha's Hospital Bangalore*, 1986
8. Simo Anthony, *History of Archdiocese of Bangalore*.
9. Singh, S.D., *The Catholic Missionaries of India*. Varanasi, 1990
10. Soares, Aloysius *The Catholic Church in India*, Bombay, 1964.
11. Thekkedath, J., *History of Christianity in India*. Bangalore, 1982.

# **A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENTS ADVANCED BY THE OPPONENTS AGAINST HOME RULE**

**Dr. Mrs. S.YASODHAMANI**

*Assistant Professor of History  
Govt. Arts College (Autonomous), Karur*

In the freedom struggle of India, the Home Rule Movement was a significant national activity that greatly disturbed the then imperial authorities in India.

The Home Rulers vociferously advocated the demand for Home Rule, but they had to confront a strong opposition from a group which mainly comprised of the Christians, Orthodox Muslims, Non-Brahmins, Anglo-Indians, Zamindars, Landowners, Sikhs and Parsis. In this paper, an analysis is made on the arguments advanced by the opponents against the immediate grant of Home Rule to India. The paper is entirely based on the archival sources consulted from the Adyar Library and Research Center, Adyar, Chennai, National Archives of India, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, files and proceedings from the Home Department and Report of the Native news-papers of the period concerned.

The year 1916 was one of the most momentous for India, as the movement for Home Rule was launched by the two most fiery leaders, Tilak and Besant. The movement dramatically influenced the people of India and played a pivotal role in strengthening the roots of Indian Nationalism. In a very short span of time, the movement made expeditious headway and

it became the most dominant political force in India. Its meteoric progress was witnessed throughout India and the whole of Western, Central, Northern and Southern India came under its sway<sup>1</sup>. The stalwarts of the Home Rule Movement made a strong appeal to the people through their vivid metaphors and emphatically justified their claim for Home Rule. Although the movement gathered fervent support, it had to confront strong opposition from different sections of Indian society. The strata of society which opposed the demand comprised of Christians, Orthodox Muslims, Non-Brahmins, Anglo-Indians, Zamindars, Landowners, Sikhs and Parsis<sup>2</sup>. Different groups who were averse to the concept of Home Rule had their own particular views and their apprehensions, which made them resist the demand in unison.

As far as opposition is concerned, it is a veracity that any successful movement has to withstand an opposition. They were not in compliance with the Home Rule ideals. Muslims or Christians or Non-Brahmins had their own cogent reasons, keeping in view the sectional interest and the political advancement of their community, in particular. The Home Rulers were coherent in their argument. They aspired to achieve Representative Government for the Provinces which explicitly meant that the Executive would be under the elected representatives of the people. The people who were transparently securing support from the British rule realized that their community's sectional interest would suffer an eclipse and also the political advancement of their community would be affected. It was in respect to these views that the opponents unmitigatedly countered the Home Rule demand.

The following are the specific reasons advanced by different communities for their disapproval of the grant of Home Rule.

1. The Christian community's perspective regarding Home Rule was that the time was yet not ripe and was inappropriate for the Indians to take the governance of the country into their own hands<sup>3</sup>. They were apprehensive that if, Home Rule was acceded to India, its condition would be similar to that of Russia. They reckoned that for the proper functioning of the Government of the country, unity was a pre-requisite and Indians did not fulfill this criteria<sup>4</sup>. According to them, India lacked homogeneity<sup>5</sup> and the movement was confined to a few politically educated persons. They were convinced that India lacked universality and was "unfit" to govern her own internal affairs<sup>6</sup>.
2. The Orthodox Muslims who posed a vehement challenge to the demand reckoned that the acceptance of Home Rule would only mean the establishment of Hindu Rule<sup>7</sup>. They contemplated that Besant was all for the Hindus and this would place the Muslim minority under the "iron heels of the unsympathetic Hindu majority"<sup>8</sup>. The Aligarh School of thought was acutely against the Home Rule creed<sup>9</sup> and believed that it would result in the destruction of the country<sup>10</sup>.
3. Fear of Brahmin predominance was a potent factor in shaping the views of the non-Brahmins<sup>11</sup>. They felt apprehensive that the grant of Home Rule would result in the entrenchment of the Brahmans in the administration and lead to Brahman Rule<sup>12</sup>. They were convinced that Besant was all for the Brahmins and regarded her as an "Irish Brahmini"<sup>13</sup>.
4. The Anglo-Indians who belonged to an affluent society that and were endowed with great power and privileges, feared their future in India was uncertain<sup>14</sup>. They were in support of the existing bureaucratic form of government and desired to maintain their influence, which, otherwise, with the grant of Home Rule would either vanish or diminish<sup>15</sup>.

5. The Zamindars, Landowners, Sikhs and Parsis were of the opinion that the rise and prosperity of their community was entirely due to the British rule and Home Rule would only result in decreasing their benefits<sup>16</sup>. They thought that the Hindus would only work for the advancement of their own community and, as far as their community was concerned, it would suffer a great setback<sup>17</sup>.

When we closely examine the arguments put forth by the opponents, their desire was for the continuance of British rule. They displayed a remarkable unanimity on the point that their community's interest would flourish only when power rested in British hands; otherwise, they feared the political advancement of their community would suffer an eclipse and would result in incalculable loss.

Both Tilak and Besant expounded the view that India was ruled by bureaucrats and that the government of this country must be solely responsible to its own people and not to any other country. It is certainly true that bureaucrats can never identify themselves with the dominated country's interest. The policy makers and decision makers who dominated the administration were generally foreigners, whose allegiance lay with their country of origin rather than with the country they came to rule. So, how was it possible for Indians to support the English bureaucratic rule. The only viable alternative which the Home Rulers discerned to this problem was the immediate grant of self-government. They regarded self-government as the only panacea to such a problem because this was the only form of government which could provide an atmosphere for indigenous development. By self-government, the leaders of the Home Rule movement meant Representative Government where the aspirations of the people were valued and respected<sup>18</sup>. They were of the

view that there should be a Viceroy who should act in accordance with the council of the representatives of the people and that the expenditure should be with the consent of the people<sup>19</sup>. They claimed that good government howsoever good it may be, can never be better than the worst self-government<sup>20</sup> and emphatically denounced the bureaucratic form of government<sup>21</sup>.

The opponents attributed the existing peace and progress of their community to the British rule and feared that Home Rule if granted would eventually lead to the destruction of the country. One fails to comprehend how the British rule could prove to be beneficial for the subject country?. The truth is that a foreign government can more appropriately have cognizance of its own country's requirements rather than that of a subject country. For any successful government, co-operation and participation of the people are the pre-requisite. A foreign government in case of any conflict of interest between the home and the subject country cannot give preference to the subject country. Besant explicitly discussed the pros and cons of Efficiency in her Presidential address at the Calcutta Congress in 1917. She applied Gokhale's Four Tests of Efficiency to judge whether the government was progressive and expressed that the bureaucracy had failed to improve the moral and material conditions of life in India<sup>22</sup>. She remarked, "The British administration while efficient in those matters which concern the British interest is inefficient in the greater matters on which the healthy life and happiness of the people depend"<sup>23</sup>.

The opponents inferred that their community's representation would be adversely affected and Home Rule, would result in the entrenchment of the Hindus in the administration. During the Lucknow Congress, Tilak expressed his willingness to accede to 35% representation of the UP Mohammedans,<sup>24</sup> at a time

when the Mohammedans themselves were demanding a 30% representation<sup>25</sup>. It was Tilak who found a key to the most perplexing question of the Hindu-Muslim discord. Tilak was of the view that in order to “gain the desired end, there is no objection to accede a greater percentage to the Muslims”<sup>26</sup>. As recorded in the *Weekly Report of the Director of Criminal Intelligence*.” This was for the first time in the Constitutional History of the World that such an effective safeguard for the protection of a minority has been adopted by the representatives of the whole people. This gave the Mussalmmans the real sense of security for which they have been striving ever since they entered the political field. The Hindu – Muslem settlement with its broad basis of trust and good will was an epoch-making event and opened up a new chapter in the history of this country”<sup>27</sup>.

The Muslims were given over representation in the Provincial Legislatures of Bihar, Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces<sup>28</sup>. Their over representation is presented in a tabular form<sup>29</sup>.

<b>Presidency</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Representation</b>
Bihar	13%	25%
Bombay	20%	33.50%
Madras	7%	15%
Central Province	4%	10%

The above mentioned table apparently displays the preference given to the Muslim community, and, therefore, there should have been no apprehension amongst the Muslims about the entrenchment of the Hindus in the administration. As compared to the population of these provinces, the representation accorded to the Muslims was very high.

The opponents were convinced that the demand lacked universal aspiration and was confined only to the politically educated class. Though their claim was right; the fact cannot be ignored that it was only this microscopic minority, that was representing Indian Society. It was only their English education that brought them to a position where their demands could reach the ears of the British upper echelon. To put a cloak over the demand and to say that the movement lacked universal aspiration would be unfair as the claim for Home Rule as put forth by them on behalf of the Indian people. If they lacked the desire then it would have never have been possible to establish branches of the Home Rule League in the provinces, districts and villages.

The opponents contemplated that the movement was not mass-based and that it lacked unity. Although there is some truth in the statement that the movement was not mass-based, their opinion that the masses were not ready for Home Rule cannot be accepted. Those who stayed away from the movement were not so much against the demand, as resentful of the leadership of an Irish lady. Besant possessed a tremendous following among the educated classes. They had a firm belief both in her pen and tongue. One can never expect the involvement of the illiterate masses in a constitutional struggle. Within a very short span of time when Gandhi launched the Non Co-operation Movement in 1920, there was a tremendous mass following. If we accept the non-involvement of the masses then how was it possible to launch a movement after the World War when Britain was passing through its most crucial time? The answer to this question lies in the participation of the people who made the movement a living gospel. The movement was launched and the whole of Western, Central, Northern and Southern India was under its sway.



The critics of Home Rule believed that India was not fit for self-government and conditions would worsen if it was granted. They explained that the Home Rule demand involved neither the denial of British sovereignty nor changes of a catastrophic nature in the existing political relations between India and England<sup>30</sup>. They drew a demarcation line between fitness for Home Rule and fitness for independence. "When people are fit for independence they do not argue about it; they simply win it-snatch it for themselves. But the agitation for Home Rule was not for independence, but for the demand of Home Rule, which clearly meant that we agree to remain within the British Empire and have internal autonomy"<sup>31</sup>. Tilak did not want any change in the relation of India with England<sup>32</sup>. He opined that India should be allowed to determine for herself the form of Government best suited to her conditions as no civilized nation should be governed by any other nation<sup>33</sup>. He said that without freedom, it is impossible for us to attain that position to which we are entitled as a birthright<sup>34</sup>.

Tilak was averse to the argument of "unfitness" and argued, "Our opponents say, ask for Home Rule as much as you like, but you must not criticize the bureaucracy. It was as if you ask a man to eat a fruit without biting it. How could the demand for Home Rule be justified without showing that there were defects in the present mode of the working of the Government which were incurable without Home Rule for India?"<sup>35</sup> He stipulated that "Swaraj means the power to rule our homes and hence it is called, in short, Home Rule. It is your birth-right to govern your home; nobody else can claim to do it, unless you are a minor or lunatic. Home Rule is our *Dharma*, you cannot separate it from us, as you cannot separate the quality of heat from fire; both are inseparably bound up"<sup>36</sup>.

The *Japan Chronicle*, one of the most important newspapers in Japan, published a remarkable article in its issue of December 17<sup>th</sup>, 1908, on the Nationalist Party in India regarding India's fitness for self-government. The Editor wrote ... "The people of India, it is declared, are not fit for self-government. But it must be remembered that this is said by the holders of power, who naturally do not want to surrender it; who think, not entirely without reason, that they are the ablest rulers in the world and that their government is necessarily a blessing to any non-Christian race. Whether the assertion be true or not, it cannot be said to be impartial. But a nation cannot be treated as a child or a minor. The blacksmith in the story, when asked how he learned to make horseshoe fast and well, replied, "By making horseshoes". In the same way, a nation cannot learn the use of liberty except by using liberty"<sup>37</sup>. John Morley, Secretary of State for India, in his work on the *Life of Gladstone* wrote: "It is liberty alone which fits men for liberty"<sup>38</sup>.

Those opposed to Home Rule were of the opinion that India was inhabited by people of different races, castes, creeds and religions whose personal interests differed fundamentally. India was not a homogeneous country and was merely a geographical expression. The Home Rulers justified their view by putting forth the example of America. They believed that "America is not at the present day homogeneous, as regards race, religion and language. Canada is not homogeneous nor is Transvaal which enjoys self-government of a representative type. The people there are of many races and follow many creeds. Slavs form nearly half the population. The Teutonic race predominates in the West and South-West and Germans form about one-fourth of the total population. When these countries being so heterogeneous in nature can enjoy the status of self-government, then why not India? If self-government and that too of a

Republican type, has proved to be a success in America, we do not see any reason why it should not be in India also?"<sup>39</sup>.

The Home Rulers made it clear that Home Rule was the struggle for obtaining control over the management of their internal affairs only. The term Home Rule itself implies, "a Home to Rule." The Home Rulers explained that demanding Home Rule does not mean that it was a revolt against the British King and Parliament, but it means constitutional and orderly changes in the existing system of administration suited to India. They argued that Home Rule was a Constitutional aspiration of the Indians. The Home Rulers took the view that Indians had a Constitutional right to urge a change in the visible form of the government for the better administration of the country<sup>40</sup>. The logic given by the Home Rulers in justification of their demand made it apparent that their claim for Home Rule was not seditious. With their impressive mass of evidence, they successfully proved that India was legitimately entitled to Home Rule. Undoubtedly, the movement had to confront opposition, but unity was utterly lacking among the opponents of Home Rule and therefore, it became possible for the Home Rulers to withstand pressure and carry out their demand expeditiously. The ardent zeal of the Home Rulers to attain their object was strengthened with every passing day.

## References

1. Home Department, Political – A, January 1917, Pr. No. 444-468 p. 7.
2. Home Department, Political – B, January 1918, Pr.No. 487-490 p. 7.
3. General Administrative Department, File no. 553/1917, *Address given by the Christian Community during Montagu's visit*

- to India (United Provinces)* UP State Archives (hereinafter UPSA) Lucknow, p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, p.3.
  5. Chatterjee, Ramananda, *Towards Home Rule, Part II* , Modern Review Office, Calcutta, 1917, p. 73.
  6. Durgadas, B. Advani, *The Case for Self-government*, Sind Publishing House, Hyderabad, 1916 p. 13.
  7. Home Department, Political –B, January 1918, Pr. No. 487-490 p. 6.
  8. Home Department, Political –B, September 1917, 6 Deposit, p. 5.
  9. *Indian Opposition to Home Rule, A Collection of Extracts from Addresses, Memorials and Lectures of Indians of various Castes and Creeds belonging to different Provinces protesting against the grant of Home Rule to India as demanded by the Congress and Muslim League*, N.M.M.L., 1918, p. 37.
  10. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.
  11. Home Department, Political, January 1918, 59 Deposit, p.10.
  12. *Non-Brahmin* dated December 24, 1917 in the article entitled New India and the Non-Brahmin, for the week ending 6<sup>th</sup> January, 1917 in Native Newspaper Report, 1917, in the History of Freedom Movement Papers, Region VIII, File no, 16/2, held at the Private Paper Section of the National Archives of India, New Delhi p. 12.
  13. *Non-Brahmin* dated January 21, 1917 in the article entitled The Non-Brahman Movement, for the week ending 27<sup>th</sup> January 1917, in Native Newspaper Report, 1917, in the History of Freedom Movement Papers, Region VIII, File no. 16/2, p.21.
  14. *The Englishman*, November 30, 1917, in Native Newspaper Report, 1917, List No 4, held at UPSA, Lucknow.

15. Home Department, Political January 1918, 1 Deposit p.9.
16. *Jam-e-Jamshed*, August 6, 1917, Published from Bombay, in Native Newspaper Report, 1917. List no. 4, held at UPSA, Lucknow.
17. *Report on the Administration of Madras Presidency*, (1917-1918), Part II, Madras, Adyar Library and Research Centre, Adyar, Chennai p. 5.
18. Kumar, Ravindra, *Select Documents of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak* (1880-1920), Vol. III, Anmol Publications, New Delhi, Document X, pp.47-48.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
20. Kelkar, N.C. *The Case for Indian Home Rule*, Published under the authority of the Indian Home Rule League, Poona, 1917, p 10.
21. *New India*, February 13, 1915, Adyar Library and Research Centre, Adyar, Chennai, pp. 8a-8b.
22. Besant, Annie, *The Future of Indian Politics, A Contribution to the understanding of the Present- day Problems*, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1922, PP. 194-195.
23. The Besant Spirit Series, *A Character of a Nations Liberty being the Presidential Address to the Indian National Congress 1917 by Dr Annie Besant, Vol IV*, Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Madras, 1939, p. 85.
24. General Administrative Department, File no.140/1917, File Related to the Lucknow Congress, Lucknow Meeting, Report III, UPSA, Lucknow, pp.17-18.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
26. Speech delivered at the meeting of the First Home Rule League held on December 30, 1916, vide Kumar, Ravindra *Select Documents of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak (1880-1920) Vol III*, Anmol Publications, NewDelhi, document IX, pp. 47-48.

27. General Administrative Department, File no. 140/1917, File Related to the Lucknow Congress, Lucknow Meeting report III p .235.
28. Home Department, Political – B, November 1916, Pr.no. 452-453 also see paragraph IV of Section I Congress and Muslim Leagues Scheme of Reforms reproduced in The Indian Demands, held in Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi, p.97.
29. Home Department, Political – B, November 1916, Pr.No.452-453 p.1.
30. Home Rule Series No, 12, Library and Research Centre, Adyar, Chennai, p.3.
31. Chatterjee Ramananda, *Op.Cit.*
32. Bal Gangadhar Tilak: *His Speeches and Writings*, Ganesh and Co., Madras, 1918, p.250.
33. Kelkar, N.C., *Op.Cit.*
34. Home Department, Political – B, January 1918, Pr. No. 487-490 p.7.
35. Kumar, Ravindra, *Op.Cit.*
36. Bal Gangadhar Tilak: *His Speeches and Writings*, Ganesh and Co., Madras, 1918, P. 250.
37. Chatterjee, Ramananda, *Op.Cit.*
38. Sunderland, J.T., *India In Bondage, Her Right to Freedom*, Calcutta, 1929, p.418.
39. Chatterjee, Ramananda, *Towards Home Rule, Part I, Modern Review Office, Calcutta*, 1917, p.73.
40. Home Rule Series No. 12, held at the Adyar Library and Research Centre, Adayar, Chennai, p.3.

# **WOMEN UPLIFTMENT BY RAGHUPATHI VENKATARATHNAM NAIDU – A STUDY**

**Prof. T. NAGAMMA**

*Dept. of History, S.V. University, Tirupati.*

and

**Dr. S. REDDEPPA**

*Dept of History, S.V. University, Tirupati.*

## **Introduction**

The Andhra society, during the first quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had experienced the stirrings of reform activity undertaken by the missionaries of Western countries through the British Government. These missionaries were led by Charles Grant, an intellectual and a high priest of Evangelism (a sect of Christianity). He was also an influential director of the English East India Company<sup>1</sup>. The missionaries who laid emphasis on education included in their programme, spreading Christianity in India in general and in South India in particular. Due to the efforts of the missionaries, the Charter Act of 1813 was passed with terms pertaining to education and to lifting restrictions upon the activities of the missionaries in India. The Act was a landmark in the history of education in India<sup>2</sup>. Afterwards, the activities of the missionaries influenced South India in general and Andhra in particular. The missionaries established schools at Visakhapatnam and other parts of Andhra<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the missionary activities embraced the entire Andhra society. Apart from the spread of Christianity, the missionaries main interest was education, social reform, discipline and monotheism<sup>4</sup>. The reform measures

in the society included the abolition of slavery, Sati, dowry, female infanticide and legalizing widow-remarriages to improve the decadent society<sup>5</sup>.

Thus, the activities of the missionaries and the acts of the British Government in the social sphere influenced the Andhra region in general and the middle classes in particular. The English educated-middle class viewed the existing society as filled with evils and superstitions. To eliminate the evils and purify the society, the enlightened or elite middle class made attempts to reform the society. In this direction, they undertook liberal and humanitarian reforms which gave new life to the society. Thus, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the social reform movement in Andhra was associated with a prominent figure named Kandukuari Veerasalingam (1848-1919) who belonged to the elite middle class in Andhra<sup>6</sup>. But prior to Veerasalingam, the ideas of social reform activity were not absent in the minds of the Andhra people. Some attempts were made by the Andhra elite, who were employees of the British Government such as Enugulaveeraswamaiah, Vennelakanty Subba Rao, Muthu Narasimhayya Naidu, Samineni Mudda Narasimham, Komaleswara Srinivasapillay, Ananta Ramasastri, Paravastu Venkatarangacharyulu, Gajula Lakshminarasuchetti, Athmoory Lakshminarasimham and so on<sup>7</sup>. Thus the social reformation started by Kandukuri Veerasalingam was later on carried out by Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu in Andhra in particular, to uplift the women, especially the *nautch* girls.

### **Early life of Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu (1862-1939)**

Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu was born in September 1862 at Machilipatnam in the Krishna District. His parents were



Appaiah Naidu and Seshamamba. But he was brought up in North India as his father worked in the Army and lived in Uttar Pradesh. His father admitted him to a Urdu primary school and he studied Urdu. In that school, he was taught by Babu Dinanath Benarjee and Babu Gangadhar Mukharjee<sup>8</sup>. Their teachings were about the social reforms of William Bentinck (1828-1835) and Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833)<sup>9</sup> which helped him in broadening his outlook on society. On his father's transfer to Hyderabad, he joined the Nizam's high school and became a student of Aghoranath Chattopadhyaya, a reformer of the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal. His teachings influenced him and drew him towards the social reforms of Bengal<sup>10</sup>. After high school studies, he joined the Madras Christian College and became a graduate in physics in 1885. While he was studying at Madras, he learnt the Arabic language also. Later on, he completed M.A. in 1891 and D.Litt. in 1897 at the University of Madras<sup>11</sup>.

In 1886, he worked as a teacher for sometime at the Rajahmundry Hitakarini Upper Primary School and Ellore Christian Mission School. At that time, his teachings and discussions on religion had an impact on students of all castes and creeds. In the same year, he got married; his wife's name was Seshamamba. Later on he was invited by the Hindu College of Machilipatnam (Krishna District) and joined there as a lecturer in 1887<sup>12</sup>. Likewise, in 1892, he worked as English lecturer in Pachchaiappa's College at Madras. Again from June 1894-1898, he worked in the Noble College at Machilipatnam and also as supervisor of the hostels of the Noble College. During that period, he actively participated in the reform activities of the *Brahmo Samaj* and became associate member of the Social Purity Movement under taken by the *Brahmo Samaj*.

## His role in the Social Reform Movement in Andhra

Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu was a great scholar and a silver-tongued orator. During his stay at Machilipatnam in 1887 as a lecturer, he played a significant role in the establishment of the *Prarthana Samaj* there. He was very much involved and dedicated to his job at Machilipatnam. Even before his activities as a reformer in Andhra, he was very much influenced by Dr. Miller, an illustrious Principal of the Madras Christian College while he was there in 1885. The year of his stay at Madras led to a major breakthrough in his life. His non-conformist views got strengthened and his growing interest in the *Brahmo Samaj* was given a definite shape with the visit of Pandit Sivanathasastry to Madras in 1881. Thus, the fascination towards the activities of *Brahmo Samaj* made him play a major role in the establishment of the *Brahmo Samaj* named *Prarthana Samaj* in the Andhra region and he participated actively in the Social Purity and Temperance Movement connected to the *Brahmo Samaj* activities.

## The 'Social Purity' Movement in Andhra (1891 A.D)

The 'Social Purity' movement had, as its chief objects, the total abstinence from intoxicating drinks, purity of private life and the abolition of the *devadasi* system; consequently, the movement in its practical sphere of activities emphasized mainly, 1) Temperance movement and 2) Eradication of the *nautch* activity<sup>13</sup>.

## The Temperance Movement

The evil of drinking which was widespread among the people occupied the attention of social reformers. The habit of drinking liquor was not new to India in general and Andhra in particular. Liquor shops were opened in all parts of the Andhra country.

Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu as the President of the Social Purity Association stated that “To an Indian, Temperance has no other meaning, it denotes nothing other than total abstinence”<sup>14</sup>. Apart from Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu’s efforts, the press also played a significant role in the Temperance Movement. The journal ‘*Mandaramanjan*’ accused the British government of encouraging this vice in order to increase its revenue. The ‘*Andhra Patrika*’ praised the lectures delivered by Caine (British Inspector), who visited India during (1888-89)<sup>15</sup> about the evil consequences of the system of ‘*Abkari*’ taking liquor and its spread as a habit to women and the increase in the sale of foreign liquor. The spread of this evil in the society was again criticized by the press. The ‘*Samrajya Pradayani*’ regretted that the higher classes and even women took to drinking of liquor<sup>16</sup>. A tract in Telugu was published in 1893, enumerating the evils of drinking liquor<sup>17</sup>.

In this regard, the social conference during its 10<sup>th</sup> session at Calcutta in 1896 discussed the evil issue and passed a resolution in favour of the Temperance Movement<sup>18</sup>. In addition, the picketing and boycott of liquor shops was taken up as a part of the constructive programme of the Congress.

The vernacular journals that dealt with this problem during this period were ‘*Ravi*’, ‘*Andhra Kesari*’, ‘*Barathi*’,

‘*Desabhimani*’, ‘*Vasundara*’ etc<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, during Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu’s stay at Machilipatnam, he played a vital role in the establishment of *Prarthana Samaj* and was very much dedicated to his job for eradication of *nautch* problems as well as temperance. Later on from 1899 to 1905 he rendered his services as Principal of Mahaboob College in Secunderabad which was under the control of the Nizams. When he was leaving this job, he was felicitated by associations like the Deccan Sanitary and Liquor Prohibition Association, Social Reform Association and Anjuman-e-Mufitul Muslim Association etc. He was again appointed as Principal of Sripithapuram Rajah College at Kakinada. He accepted the responsibility on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1905<sup>20</sup>. Besides this, he also encouraged free education of women. During his principalship, the college gained popularity and achieved name and fame. He retired from this job in 1919<sup>21</sup>.

In connection with his Social Purity Movement, he presided over a number of meetings in all parts of the country and delivered lectures on the subjects such as idolatry, *nautch* problem, temperance and so on. In 1905, he presided over a meeting of *Mandalikanashtika Sabha* (Nonbelievers of God) at Rajahmundry. Similarly, a social meeting was held at Narasarao Pet (Guntur District) which was presided over by him<sup>22</sup>. Similarly, in 1906 under his leadership, a meeting was held at Calcutta (West Bengal) for condemning idolatry. It was a meeting of non-believers at one all India level. In addition to these meetings, he also presided over a political meeting held at Kakinada in 1914 to support the protest movement started by Gandhiji, while he was working in South Africa against the British Government. Later on, he presided over *Adidravida Mahasabha* (a meeting of South Indian people) at Amalapuram (East Godavari District) in 1921 and also attended as president of the non-cooperation meeting held at Kakinada in the same year<sup>23</sup>. In addition, he

was elected the president of the Brahmo Samaj centenary celebrations by the Brahmos which was held at Kakinada in 1928 and continued in this office upto 1929. He also propagated the greatness of the Bengali social reformer Raja Rammohan Roy in Andhra through centenary celebrations which were held at Kakinada in 1933<sup>24</sup>. Later on in 1937, he presided over the Kakinada Brahmo Samaj Golden Jubilee Celebrations held at Kakinada which was a grand success.

### **The Nautch Problem (or) the upliftment of Women**

In its concrete form, the Social Purity Movement was started with the anti-*nautch* agitation. The *nautch* question agitated the minds of the reformers mainly on three grounds. Viz, 1) Improving Morality in Society 2) As part of uplift of women and 3) Removing the stigma on *nautch* girls who came to be associated with fine arts like music and dance. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the institutions of *nautch* or *Devadasis* come to be considered as nothing but prostitution. The *devadasis* developed into a caste which, shockingly enough, was exclusively meant for public pleasure<sup>25</sup>.

The institution of *devadasis* associated with the temples in the south has been in existence for quite a long time. Dancing girls took the name of *devadasis* (female attendants of the gods) in the South. They performed dances in front of the gods. Their services were considered as one among the rites and rituals<sup>26</sup>. Gradually, they were no longer confined to temples and people began to hire them to provide entertainment during marriages, festivals and also to entertain European officials. Thus, their presence during public functions both religious and secular tended to create an atmosphere of lasciviousness, especially among the young.

Thus, the dancing girls, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century occupied an honoured place in Andhra society. They were present on all public occasions. Dancing girls were patronized by leading members of society such as *vakils*, government officials and businessmen and so on.

*Nautch* parties were organized in the name of certain prominent individuals and came to be known to the public as *Naidus 'Melam'* (*Naidus Nautch* group). In most cases, officials were the chief patrons of these *nautch* parties<sup>27</sup>. They were present during the performances and it became obligatory on the part of their subordinates and other common public to be present.

Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu A.D. (1862-1939) was the leader of the Social Purity Movement in Andhra and in Madras City<sup>28</sup>. While he was at Madras, he was instrumental in starting the anti-*nautch* movement which made quick progress and spread to other towns in the Madras Presidency. While he was associated with the editorial boards of the journals, as the people's friend, as a fellow worker and the *Brahmo Prakasica* at Madras, he was constantly writing in their columns about the 'Social Purity' movement<sup>29</sup>. The basis of the anti-*nautch* movement, he declared "is not in fine manners, but in good morals, its aim is not mere elegant breeding, but pure living<sup>30</sup>. As the President of the Metropolitan Temperance and Social Purity Association, he visited many places in Andhra such as Machilipatnam, Eluru, Rajahmundry and Secunderabad and spoke on the anti-*nautch* movement<sup>31</sup>. Besides this, the Madras Hindi Social Reform Association also took up the issue. Lord Wenlock, Governor of Madras (1891-1896) was the first prominent official who refused to attend this type of entertainment. The reformers protested against the participation of Eardley Norton, a British

official in the Indian National Congress during its session at Madras in 1894 as he was violating public morals by living with a woman who had not obtained divorce from her husband<sup>32</sup>.

In addition, to educate people on this issue, Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu used his creative talent and wrote a satire '*Vesypriya Prahasanam*', in which he ably met all the arguments of the opponents of the reform<sup>33</sup>. For example, the possible damage to music and fine-arts if the *nautch* was abolished.

Besides this, the press as well as a few writers took up the cause of the Anti-*Nautch* Movement. In 1880, a small article '*Parihosollasini*' was published, ridiculing the *nautch* profession<sup>34</sup>. A tract named '*Varakantha Pravarthana*' in verse on the ways and methods followed by *nautch* girls was written by Dasu Lakshmi Narayana<sup>35</sup>. The press pleaded with the Government to pass legislation abolishing the institution of *nautch* as the neighboring Mysore Government had done. Besides this, the Kalavantula Social Reform Propaganda Committee commenced its activity in May 1926 by visiting the houses of *nautch* girls in towns and villages with a view to dissuading them from pursuing their disreputable profession. The response was encouraging in Rajahmundry, Eluru, Machilipatnam, Vijayawada and in Rayalaseema Districts. In Rajahmundry 145 families of *nautch* girls and 40 families at Machilipatnam, 125 families at Vijayawada pledged to give up their traditional profession. Moreover, the Rayalaseema District *nautch* girls got married to discourage the *nautch* parties<sup>36</sup>.

The impact of the Social Purity Movement could further be illustrated by a report published in the Indian Social Reformer. The anti-*nautch* Movement gained popularity in almost all parts of the Andhra region. Thus, the Social Purity Movement made

tremendous impact on the the Andhra society<sup>37</sup>. The nautch girls expressed their pleasure at the initiative introduced by the Government prohibiting girls below the age of 16 years in the profession. The Bill in protection of minor girls was introduced in the Central Legislature. To support the bill, the '*Krishnapatrika*' exhorted the people to hold meetings and make it a law. Finally, the *Devadasi* Act was passed in 1947. It stated that girls' of age 16 years and above be prohibited from dancing and they were liable to be punished with imprisonment for six months or with a fine of Rupees 500 or with both<sup>38</sup>.

## Conclusion

To sum up, the second phase of Social Reform Activities in Andhra was started in the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu. He belonged to the second generation of social reformers in Andhra society. He was a strong follower of the *Brahmo Samaj* and became the principal leader of the social purity and temperance movement connected to the *Brahmo Samaj*. He was one among the social reformers who dedicated his life to abolish social evils and to purify the society. As a *Brahmo*, he endeavored to uplift the women of poor families and also the women who were involved in '*devadasi*' or *nautch* profession in particular. He strove hard to remove the stigma on '*devadasi*' or *nautch*. His constant efforts stirred the nautch community and the male members came forward to stop the profession. Thus, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw many reformers but Naidu was the only unique personality who made strenuous efforts and played a major role in the eradication of '*devadasis*'.



## References

1. Jha, D.N., *Ancient India. An Introductory Outline*, Temples Publishing House, New Delhi.
2. Keneth Ingham, *Reforms in India 1736-1833*, An account of the work of Christian Missionaries on a behalf of social reform, London, 1956, p. 48.
3. Ramakrishna, V., *Social Reforms in Andhra*, New Delhi, 1983, p.51.
4. Santhinatham, S., *History of Education in the Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1994, p.52.
5. Mccully, B.T., *English Education and the Origins of Indian Nationalism*, Cambridge University press, 1966, pp.135-42.
6. Ramakrishna, V., *op. cit.*, p. 62.
7. Koti Reddy, A.V., *Modern Andhra History*, Telugu, Hyderabad, 1982, pp. 86-87.
8. Suryanarayana, K., *Brahmarshi Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu*, (Rajahmundry, 1952), pp.16-18.
9. Grover B.L., and Grover S., *A New look in Modern India History*, New Delhi, 1980, pp.182.
10. Ramakrishna, V., *Op.cit.*, p.136.
11. Suryanarayana, K., *Brahmarshi Raghupathi Venkatarathnam Naidu*, Rajahmundry, 1952, pp.22-24.
12. *Ibid*, pp.67-68.
13. *Indian Social Reformer*, Vol.49, New Delhi, 1907, No.40.
14. Gopala Swamy, K.V. Ed., *Grace Abiding: Message and Ministration of Brahmarshi, Sri. Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu*, Kakinada, 1965, p.148.
15. Bose, Pramatha Nath, *A History of Hindu Civilization*, Vol. I, II, III, New Delhi, 1975, pp.101-102.
16. *Samrajya Pradayani*, (Daily), February, 1892.

17. Gurulinga Devara B., *The lecture on Alcohol* (Ellore), 1893.
18. Chintamani, C.Y., *Indian social Reformer* (Madras, 1901), p.372.
19. *The Hindu*, February 15, 1908.
20. *Ibid*, pp.83-85.
21. *Ibid*, pp.140-145.
22. K. Surayanarayana, *Op.cit.*, p.113.
23. *Ibid.*, p.114.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Gopala Swamy, K.V. Ed., *Grace Abiding: Message and Ministrations of Brahmarshi Sir. Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu*, Kakinada, 1965, p.148.
26. *Op.cit.*, p.101.
27. Veeresalingam, *Sweeyacharithra*, part-1, p.90.
28. Suryanarayana, K., *Op.cit.*, pp.4-7.
29. *Indian Social Reformer*, Vol.33, New Delhi, 1907, No.49.
30. Chintamani, C.Y., *Indian Social Reformer*, Madras, 1901, p.271.
31. Suryanarayana, K., *Op.cit.*, p.25.
32. Netarajan, S., *A Century of Social Reform in India* (Bombay, 1959), pp.101-102.
33. Appa Rao, M.R., *Brahmarshi Raghupati Venkataratnam Naidu*, Telugu, Kakinada, 1972, p.43.
34. *Purushartha Pradayani*, January, February, 1881.
35. Lakshmi Narayana, D., *Varakantha Pravarthana* (Bezawada, 1909).
36. Kesavanarayana B., *Political and Social Factors in Andhra 1900-1956*, (Vijayawada, 1976), p.41.
37. Kesavanarayana B., *Op.cit.*, pp.225-226.
38. Kesavanarayana B., *Op.cit.*, p.229.

# VANISHING TANKS – A FEW EXAMPLES FROM MADRAS CITY

LALITHA RAMADURAI

*Research Scholar*

*C.P.R.Institute of Indological Research*

*The C.P.Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation, Chennai.*

## Introduction

Indian culture is among the few cultures in the world that reveres water and its different sources. Rivers such as the Ganga, Yamuna and Kaveri are seen as nourishing mother-Goddesses. There are religious hymns and songs, stories and tales to glorify the waterbodies. Festivals and fairs are celebrated even today as thanksgiving to them. Yet water scarcity stares us in the face today. India's rapid population growth, economic development, industrialisation and unplanned urbanisation have all contributed to water shortages and water pollution. We have some of the most extreme water shortages in the world.

But not very long ago, most Indian villages and towns were self-reliant in meeting the water needs of its residents. Each place had its own unique systems of water harvesting adapted to local conditions such rainfall, temperature, altitude, topography and soil types. The *Khadin* or *Dhora* of western Rajasthan, the *Baolis* of Gujarat, the *Ahar Pynes* indigenous to south Bihar, the *Phad* system of Maharashtra are all well-known examples<sup>1</sup>.

In the southern parts of India too, people had a sound knowledge and gave utmost importance to water harvesting.

They built canals and barrages along water sources to conserve and effectively utilise water for irrigation and other purposes. Also, popular were the tanks that are defined as ‘a hollow in the ground partly natural and partly artificial or wholly artificial created to hold water of the rains throughout the year, or part of the dry season intervening the rainy periods. The catchment basin is smaller than those of rivers and is local in character, though the tank and the channels feeding them, may themselves form the source of smaller rivers or their tributaries<sup>2</sup>’. Known by various names such as *kere*, *cheruvu*, *thataka*, *theertha*, *madaga*, *kulam*, *ery*, etc.<sup>3</sup>, the tanks very well suited the local conditions in the region - scanty rainfall, steep slopes leading to quick run-off and soil with low water retention.

## Tanks in Tamilnadu and their Decline

In the state of Tamilnadu, thousands of tanks (locally referred to as the *erys*) were constructed, mostly in the medieval period. The Sangam literature describes in great detail about the irrigation culture (*Marudham*) of those days and refers to tanks scattered throughout the countryside. Kings and rulers were praised for constructing and maintaining tanks. The *Pattupattu*, for instance, glorifies Karikala Chola as having reclaimed forest lands for settlement and added to the prosperity of his Kingdom by creating irrigational tanks in the phrases:

“*Kadu Konru Nadakki, Kullam Tottu Valam Perukki*”  
(Pattinappaalai, 283-4)<sup>4</sup>

Tank bunds were formed in suitable places to catch the rain water and store them for being utilised. There were surplus arrangements as well as sluices for regular discharge of water.

Both rain-fed and river-fed tanks were utilised. They were often built in a series; usually situated a few kilometres apart, which ensured:

- ❖ no wastage through overflow
- ❖ the seepage of a tank higher up in the series would be collected in the next lower one.

The tanks were also used in conjunction with channels and anicuts. The Anglo-Indian dictionary of 1886 by Henry Yule and A.C.Burnell explains an anicut as – ‘used in the irrigation of Madras Presidency for the dam constructed across a river to fill and regulate the supply of channels drawn off from it; the cardinal work in fact of the great irrigation systems. The word, which has of late years become familiar all over India, is the Tam., comp., *anai-kattu*, ‘dam-building’<sup>5</sup>.

The design and functioning of many of the tanks very well match with the most modern, sophisticated, scientific approaches. The Panamalai tank constructed around 700 A.D. by King Rajasimha Pallava is a good example. The tank was formed connecting a series of hillocks around and having the surplus arrangements through a bed of natural rock formations. Some of the tanks constructed during the ancient period are, in fact, comparable or even bigger than present day dams. The Veeranam tank, for example, has a *bund* (embankment) 16 km in length. The Gangaikonda Cholapuram tank constructed by King Rajendran I survives even today with a 25 km embankment<sup>6</sup>.

Traditionally, the tanks played several important roles –

- ❖ as an important source of irrigation in paddy cultivation,
- ❖ as a flood control device, which also prevents soil erosion and wastage of runoff during heavy rain

- ❖ as important water storage and groundwater recharge structures
- ❖ as an mini-ecosystem that plays an important role in the region's microclimate

The tanks were also closely linked to the social and economic lives of the local communities. For instance, fishing in the tanks was an important source of income. The mud removed during de-silting was used in pottery and for construction purposes<sup>7</sup>.

Till the British arrived, the local communities maintained the tanks. Historical data from Chengalpattu district, for instance, indicated that in the 18<sup>th</sup> century about 4-5 percent of the gross produce of each village was allocated to maintain the tanks and other irrigational structures. Assignment of revenue-free lands, called *manyams*, were made to support village functionaries who undertook to maintain and manage the tanks. The early British rule saw disastrous experiments with the land tenure system in quest of larger land revenues. The enormous expropriation of village resources by the state led to the disintegration of the traditional society, its economy and polity. Allocation for maintenance of tanks could no longer be supported by the village communities, and the efficient water harvesting systems began to decline<sup>8</sup>.

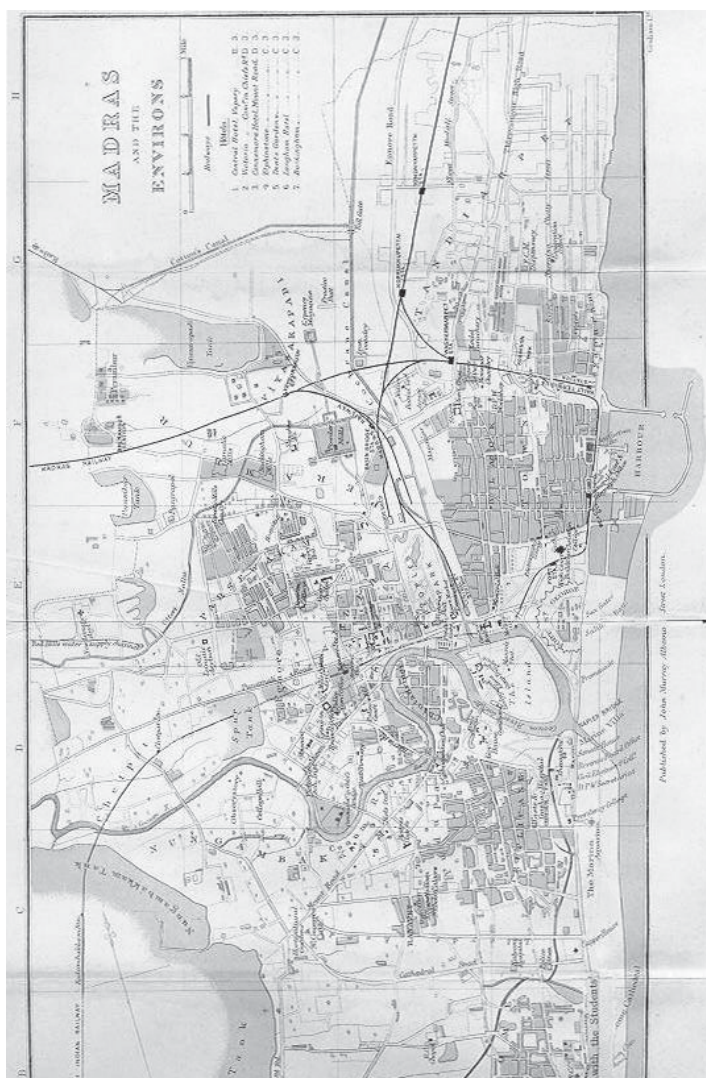
Since Independence, the state Government has initiated several tank development programmes as part of overall irrigation development works. Yet, the role of tanks as a source of water is getting reduced continuously. This is mainly attributed to large-scale encroachments (both by private / public agencies), structural decay and weed infestation. More importantly, the authorities as well as the public at large perceive the tanks as minor water

sources with low importance as compared to canals and dams. They are often seen as wastelands that could put to better uses.

## **Chennai - A Classic Example of Tank Loss**

The history of Chennai city only goes back about 372 years, though the area where the city and its suburbs stand now were of great significance since ancient times. The city today is the fourth largest metropolis in the country. The Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) comprising of the revenue district of Chennai and surrounding areas of Kanchipuram and Thiruvallur districts, spreads over an area of 1,189 sq.kms. The city has grown up on a strip of land about 14 km along the coast and about 4-6 km broad. The bulk of it at the time of British occupancy and for long after, was agricultural lands irrigated from tanks. In fact, old maps of Chennai and its neighbouring areas show the entire terrain studded with ponds and tanks. Some of tanks were quite extensive such as the Long Tank, Vysarpadi Tank and Spur Tank.

While a few contained good water derived from springs, most of them were filled by the rains during the monsoons. They dried up during the summers. People used water from these sources for all their necessities. But unfortunately, the tanks were gradually neglected and allowed to become filthy. Due to cattle being washed in them and their banks being used for open defecation, they became a threat to the health of the inhabitants in the vicinity instead of being useful and beneficial<sup>9</sup>. Added to this, the imperatives of urban development, particularly housing, led to the further destruction of these precious resources. This continues even today as the city expands in all directions. The following paragraphs look at some of the tanks that were



Old Madras Map of 1909 showing some of the tanks



destroyed during the different stages of the expansion of Madras, now Chennai.

### **Long Tank (Nungambakkam and Mylapore Tanks combined)**

The Long tank extended in the form of a crescent for nearly 6 kms and included the Mylapore tank and Nungambakkam tank. It drained into the river Adyar vide the Mylapore tank that received surpluses from its free basin of 2.81 sq.miles as well the surplus from the Nungambakkam tank<sup>10</sup>. In 1923, the Town planning trust of Chennai felt that city was getting congested and faced housing shortages. It prepared the Mambalam Housing Scheme spread over 1,600 acres of land. The bulk of this land was obtained by breaching the Mylapore and Nungambakkam tanks in 1930<sup>11</sup>.

Begining in 1941, to accommodate the ever-growing population of the city, the Corporation of Chennai developed the area occupied by the Nungambakkam tank as a planned residential neighbourhood<sup>12</sup>. (This explains the presence of the 'Lake Area' neighbourhood in Nungambakkam even today, though the lake is long gone!) It is today one of the finest residential areas in the city. A part of the Nungambakkam tank was earlier reclaimed to accommodate the 54-acre campus of the Jesuits' Loyola College under the supervision of the first principal of the college, Fr.Bertram<sup>13</sup>. In 1974, the last remnants of the tank were also reclaimed to construct the Valluvar Kottam - a built temple-cart dedicated to the Tamil poet, Thiruvalluvar - at a cost of Rs.99 lakhs<sup>14</sup>.

## Vyasarpadi Tank

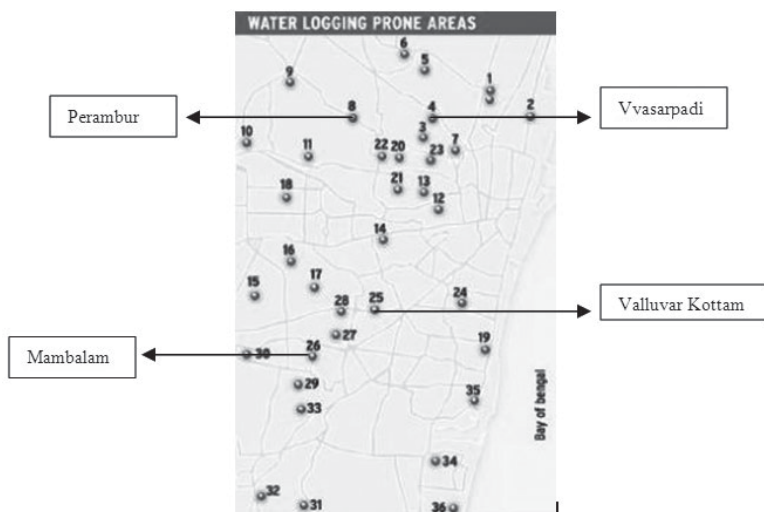
The Vyasarpadi tank was situated immediately to the west of the Vyasarpadi village. In addition to the drainage from its free basin, the tank used to receive the surpluses of 28 upstream tanks including the Sembiam, Korattur, Madavaram and Ambattur tank. These together formed the Vyasarpadi Tank Group<sup>15</sup>. The Vyasarpadi tank finally discharged into the Buckingham canal. John Gantz (1772-1853), who established Madras's earliest lithographic press is known to have owned a house by the Vyasarpadi tank. In fact, a road – the Gantz Road – was named after him<sup>16</sup>. But the tank has now vanished off the city maps. The Vyasarpadi Neighbourhood Scheme implemented by the Tamilnadu Housing Board through the 1960's and 70's was an important cause<sup>17</sup>.

## Spur Tank

The Spur tank was situated to the west of the village of Egmore (then Ellenbur). It was probably so called as it was like a spur in shape. The tank played a very important role for the well-being of the neighbouring villages<sup>18</sup>. There are references to the tank water being used for drinking purposes in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>19</sup>. Despite this, the rapid growth of the city and its population gradually ate up the tank, which was fed only for half the year by rain water. The T.B Dispensary (now called the Institute of Thoracic Medicine), was set up in a section of the tank expanse between 1917 and 1920<sup>20</sup>. Other buildings and structures also came up on the tank over the years. The remnants of the tank that can be seen (though dry most of the time) to the rear of the Kilpauk College Hospital is, in fact, the Spur

tank<sup>21</sup>. This is now the Chetpet Lake. It is interesting to note that the 1927 Annual Session of the Indian National Congress was held at the Spur Tank grounds on 26-28, December<sup>22</sup>. The existence of this large tank reminds us in present times by the name of ‘Spur Tank Road’.

The other tanks that existed in Old Madras include the Medavakkam Tank (near Kilpauk), the Chetput Tank and the Perambur Tank. They have all been overwhelmed by urban sprawl. But all these waterbodies were reclaimed at a time when we did not know much about the awesome interconnection in environment – say, between the reclamation of the lakes and water shortages or occurrence of floods. It is now well understood that as a consequence of this rapid loss of waterbodies, the extent of collective water harvesting in the city has reduced.



### Flood-prone Areas of Chennai

(Source: <http://www.hindu.com/2007/08/08/stories/2007080860560300.htm>)

The ground water levels have drastically gone down and we are spending crores of rupees on the desalination of sea water. The extinction of the waterbodies has also severely impacted flood management in the city. The reclaimed areas such as Mambalam, Vyasarpadi, Perambur and Valluvar Kottam at Nungambakkam are amongst the 36 inundation-prone zones of the city identified by the Corporation in 2007<sup>23</sup>.

But unfortunately, this is now being repeated in the sub-urban areas. Many tanks including the Velachery, Madipakkam, Kilkattalai, Pallavaram, Chitlapakkam - to name a few - are being threatened. They are likely to lose out to the frenzied urbanisation, a process that has happened in many cities. But there have been instances where people's awareness has resisted such exploitation from the land-hungry and averted long term losses to the city. Is it not time that there be a mass movement to conserve these *erys*? It is for all of us to answer.

## References

- 1 Aggarwal, A., and Narain, S., 'Dying Wisdom; Rise, Fall and the Potential of India's Traditional Water Harvesting Systems', *A Citizen's Report* No.4, CSE, New Delhi and <http://www.rainwaterharvesting.org>
- 2 Chaturvedi, B.N., 'The Origin and Development of Tank Irrigation in Peninsular India', *The Deccan Geographer*, 6 (July -December), 1968, p.62
- 3 Kotraiah, C.T.M, *Irrigation Systems and Vijayanagar Empire*; Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Mysore, Karnataka, pp.1-191, 1995.
- 4 Chellai, J.V., *Pattupattu: Ten Tamil Idylls*, South India Saiva Siddhanta Work Publication, 1962, p.19

- 5 Yule, H., and Burnell, A.C., *Hobson-Jobson: A Glossary of Colloquial Anglo Indian Words and Phrases*, 1886.
- 6 Neelakantan, V., 'History of Irrigation in Tamilnadu', PWD, Govt. of Tamilnadu, pp-27-28.
- 7 Mukundan, T.M., 'The Ery System of South India', Akash Ganga Trust, Chennai, 2005, pp.8-12.
- 8 Central Ground Water Board, '*Select Case Studies – Rain Water Harvesting and Artificial Recharge*', Ministry of Water Resources, May 2011, p.17.
- 9 *Report of the Medical Topography and Statistics of the Presidency 1842*, pg. 9
- 10 *Descriptive Memoirs of Irrigation Works in the Adyar Minor Basin of the Madras Drainage Basin*, Chingelput 1925.
- 11 Srivathsan, A. 'The Making of Mambalam', *The Hindu*, August 20, 2010 and Muthiah, S. '*Madras Rediscovered*', Westland Publishing, Chennai, 1981, p.416.
- 12 CMDA, *Second Master Plan for Chennai Metropolitan Area, 2026 - Vol.3, Chapter 1*, Chennai: CMDA, Govt. of Tamilnadu. p.5.
- 13 Muthiah, op.cit., p.427
- 14 <http://www.thehindu.com/news/states/tamil-nadu/article244009.ece>
- 15 *Descriptive Memoirs of Irrigation Works in the Red Hills Minor Basin of the Madras Drainage Basin*, 1915.
- 16 Love, H.D., *Vestiges of Old Madras*, John Murray, London-Govt. of India, 1913, p.565
- 17 G.O. No.1929 dated 30/06/1960
- 18 Rangacharya, *A History of Some Place-Names of Madras*, Madras Tercentenary Volume, Asian Educational Services, 1994, p.139.

- 19 *The Madras Quarterly Medical Journal*, Volume 1, 1839, p.367
- 20 Rangacharya, *op.cit.*, p.139, and [http://www.mmc.tn.gov.in/Department/ITM/itm\\_his.html](http://www.mmc.tn.gov.in/Department/ITM/itm_his.html)
- 21 Muthiah, *op.cit.*, p.381
- 22 Zaidi, S.G., '*The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress- Vol.9*', S. Chand & Co. Ltd, New Delhi, 1980, p.219.
- 23 Achuthan, K., 'Corporation identifies 36 flood prone areas', *The Hindu*, August 8, 2007.

# **HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY**

**KRISHNA CHAITANYA MOPIDEVI**

*Research Scholar,  
University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad.*

**&**

**S. SRINIVASA RAO**

*Research Scholar,  
Dravidian University, Kuppam.*

## **Is Biography a part of History?**

Whether biography is a genre part of history or not is the first question that a historian encounters when she thinks of taking up a biographical study. This question is not odd to answer because biography has been estimated in many disciplines in the social sciences. This shift to biographies in the social sciences has been described as “a paradigm change or a change of knowledge culture affecting not only the orientations of a range of disciplines, but their interrelations with each other... it may be characterized as a subjective or cultural turn in which personal and social meanings, as bases of actions, gains greater prominence”<sup>1</sup>.

There are similarities between history and biography. History is a part of epistemology that seeks knowledge of the past. The process of writing history involves two important activities. One is collection of source materials or “facts” and the other is combining them with an “interpretation”<sup>2</sup>. There has been a debate on the nature of this process of knowing the past.

Modernists believe that they can discover the truth of the past through history and emphasize objectivity in the process of its writing which is possible through maintaining a distance between subject and object. But this notion of history has been reproached by the Post-Modernists. This group maintains healthy scepticism on the testimony of evidence and thinks that objectivity in history may not be possible. History, for them, is not a tool to discover truth in the past but a narrative representation that substitutes what once was<sup>3</sup>. Biography is an attempt to know the meaning of how the subject lived in the past and it involves similar process of knowing the past in history. “Biography like history (social and cultural) is based on archival research, interweaves historical categories and methodologies, and reflects current political and theoretical concerns”<sup>4</sup>. Like in history (in the Post-Modernist understanding), biography is also devising and experimenting with different rhetorical models by which the biographer narrates what he thinks is the meaning of the past. In other words, like history, it is also an authorial imagination shaped by the needs of their community<sup>5</sup>. It does not mean to say that both history and biography are fiction. Though both of them maintain healthy scepticism of the testimony of facts, still they are bound by the facts of the past. Meanings of “facts” in biography and history would not remain the same forever. As in science, they tend to change according to new facts and opinions<sup>6</sup>. Thus, history is all about the improvisation of giving meaning to the past.<sup>1</sup> The same holds true of biography too.

## **What does a Historian bring to Biography?**

In recent times, many historians are taking up the writing of biographies. This trend is facilitated by recent shifts in history which is privileged to take up subjective view points; considering



experience as an area of exploration and absorption of collective memories of individuals into the web of historical sources<sup>8</sup>. But biography, though accepted as a part of history, has been considered as a degraded form of history. Many historians, though, are taking up studies based on individual lives; they are reluctant to accept their works as biographies. For instance, Judith Brown does not consider her works on Gandhi and Nehru as biographies and herself as a biographer<sup>9</sup>. Obvious reasons for giving a relatively lower position to biography in history are that the periodization in biography is pre-determined which starts and ends with the birth and death respectively of the subject individual; analysis and argument centred on the subject individual alone; and it is related to literary studies and not a scientific or sociological one, and finally it is also written mostly by non-academics.

While addressing these issues, one should think of the question of what a historian can bring to biography or what a historian can do in writing biography. Historians, while imagining a life of an individual, take it as evidence that could offer them a different path to the knowledge of the past. This process of imagination of individual life involves the placing of the subject individual into the context he lived in. While placing the historian questions as to how the subject individual encounters the ideas and institutions of the outside world. Kessler-Harris puts her effort in writing biography; that is to interrogate the perspective from which the subject individual spoke and wrote. In other words, her objective is to “see through the life” which not only helps us to know insights of events but also the larger socio-cultural and even political processes of the moment in time<sup>10</sup>. Judith Brown has also expressed a similar opinion on the life history approach that the interrogation of sources generated by an individual provides us access to the intense debates over

different issues that the individual had within himself or herself and with the other. In other words, the life of an individual offers us a window into the networks and systems within which the individual operated and provides an insight of changing social and political systems within which they operated<sup>11</sup>. All this is to make a point that a biography by a historian would not be confined to the individual and the events in his/her life alone, but would be rooted in ideas and events larger than the individual and connected with the society<sup>12</sup>.

There are some other criticisms from outside history circles on biography written by historians; like that they emphasize on events and processes instead of characterization and they do not take into consideration the personal lives of individuals, even though there is enough evidence. As has been noted, the historians objective in taking up biography is to study the world outside the individual through studying individual life. In such a case, events attract more emphasis over characterization in the biographies written by historians. The historian makes a choice of the sources of individual life for fulfilling his/her above said objective. Therefore, the personal lives of individuals would be considered only in such cases when they enrich or offer us a new view in understanding the world outside the individual. If the personal lives of individuals do not do that, they would be left out<sup>13</sup>.

## **Significance of Biography**

Biography is a useful medium in understanding the past as it extends the boundaries of the sources in history and enables us to form a new perspective in understanding the past. Different scholars have seen the importance of the 'biographical turn' in

history in different ways. Judith Brown states that the life history approach is more productive on the issues of deep concern for historians such as the nature of identities; the ways these identities developed overtime in different contexts and the nature of agency in the historical process; the nature of networks at local and global level within which the individual lived and worked<sup>14</sup>.

Alice Kessler-Harris is of the view that writing history based on an individual life is a way of confronting theoretical complexities and confusions in the twenty- first century. She says that she has come to terms with what is called “objective standpoints and paid more attention to the importance of the individual actor, not for what he has done but for what his thoughts, language and contests with the world reveal<sup>15</sup>.

David Nasaw states that the importance of biography lies in that it allows and encourages the historian to go beyond the strictures of identity politics without abandoning its ever expanding and useful categories<sup>16</sup>. In other words, the biographer discovers and reveals how the individual under study associates and dissociates with several identities in his/her life or has multiple-selves which are because of change of time and opinions. Explaining this particular issue, Margadant argues that “a narrative strategy designed to project a unified persona has become for the “new biographer” nearly as suspect as claims to a “definitive biography”. The subject of biography is no longer the “coherent self” but rather a self that is performed to create an impression of coherence or an individual with multiple selves whose different manifestations reflect the passage of time, the demands and options of different settings, or the varieties of way that others seek to represent that person”<sup>17</sup>. David Nasaw says that biography offers a potential space for historians to go beyond the divide

between empiricist social history and the linguistic turn of cultural history without sacrificing the achievements of both. Social history and cultural history do not recognize the significance of the individual as a historical agent but biography written by historians pays attention to individuals and their perspectives which are formed by and which give meaning to the world within which they lived. Biographies by historians proceed from the point that the individual whom they are studying is situated in the social structure but not imprisoned in them. In other words, individuals are deemed as historical agents who can go beyond the structures within which they are living in order to create new structures. But Nasaw warns that the biographer should not concede autonomous space to his subject as a historical agent and he has to go beyond their subject's perception for the meanings and possibilities that their subject could not recognize or pursue in their lifetimes. In other words, the historian writing biography should be aware of the principle that men and circumstances condition and are conditioned by each other<sup>18</sup>.

Hence, it may be said that while attempting biography a historian must adopt the same scientific methods as he is following in the writing of history. Otherwise, the so called biography will find a place in the field of fiction only.

## Reference

1. For more details on the burgeoning of the method of biography in Social Studies, see Tom Wengraf, Prue Chamberlayne, and Joanna Bornat. "A Biographical Turn in the Social Sciences? A British –European View", *Cultural Studies-Critical Methodologies* 2, no.2, 2002, pp. 245-269.

2. A point to note here is that all facts may not become “historical facts”. The summary of what is history is taken from Jenkins, Keith, *Re-thinking history*, Routledge Classics, New York, 2006 (first printed as Routledge Classic in 2003).
3. Munslow Alun, “*History and Biography: An Editorial Comment*”, *Rethinking History*, April 2003, p. 4.
4. Lois W. Banner, “Biography as History”, *American History Review Roundtable*, June 2009, p. 580.
5. Munslow Alun, *Op. Cit.*
6. Alice Kessler-Harris, “Why Biography”, *American History Review Roundtable*, June 2009, p. 626.
7. Munslow Alun, “*History and Biography: An Editorial Comment*”, p.7.
8. Alice Kessler-Harris, *Op. Cit.*, p. 626.
9. Instead of being called as biographer, she deems herself as a historian using ‘life history’ of individual or individuals as a method to seek for evidence to probe into key historical issues. See Judith M. Brown, “*Life Histories*” and the “*History of Modern South Asia*”, p. 587.
10. Alice Kessler-Harris, *Op.Cit.*, p.630.
11. She argues that the life history approach extends the availability of sources and it is particularly useful in writing the history of post-independent India. She also argues that life history approach is also applicable, apart from individual lives, to institutions, Judith M. Brown, “*Life Histories*” and the *History of Modern South Asia*”, pp. 590-1.
12. David Nasaw, “Historians and Biography”, *American History Review Roundtable*, June 2009, p. 574.
13. *Ibid*, pp. 574-5.
14. Judith M. Brown, *Op.Cit.*.
15. Alice Kessler-Harris, *Op.Cit.*, p.627.
16. David Nasaw, *Op.Cit.*, p. 576.
17. Jo Burr Margadant (Ed.), *The New Biography: Performing Femininity in Nineteenth Century, France*, Berkeley, California, U.S.A.
18. David Nasaw, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 577-8.

# **BOOK REVIEW**

## **BOOK REVIEW - I**

### **A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL INDIA FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

**SALMA AHMED FAROOQUI**

*Pearson Publishers 2011*

A compact work of 415 pages, the central focus of the book, as the title suggests, is a bird's eye view of medieval Indian History. Conceived as a text book for undergraduate classes, the book has made certain significant departures from the conventional textbooks and the relevant approaches. Firstly, compressing such a vast chronological frame into a compact volume is a challenging task and the author has done justice to the same in thirty-three chapters, giving equal weightage to all regions and her treatment of the Deccan is specifically to be mentioned as that of a scholar specializing in the history of Mughal India and the Deccan. She has focused on the major events of the medieval period and also the processes behind these events beginning from a debate on the question of the early medieval period.

What makes the book different is the conception of each chapter with a summary review, illustrations, keywords and chronological tables that serve as ready reckoners and as a valuable guide. After tracing the debate on medieval India and the question of early medieval in Indian history, the author rightly moves on to give an elaborate account of the conditions in India

during the pre-Sultanate period that serve as an eye opener on the Delhi Sultanate. A detailed treatment of the political histories of the major dynasties like the Sultanate, Mughals, Vijayanagara and the Marathas is undertaken with respect to the administration, army, revenue, art and architecture and the religious trends. In all these sections, the question of decline is handled in a nuanced fashion and here special mention must be made of the Bahmani kingdom and the rise of the Deccani Sultanates. A similar understanding regarding the rise of the regional powers after the decline of the Mughals also is seen in the later chapters that would greatly enhance the understanding of the students.

Religious thought in Medieval India with a focus on the *Bhakti* and the *Sufi* orders and the detailed treatment of these themes gives this book a completeness that seeks to place in proper context the role of religion in the life of the masses and the impact on society rather than seeing it from a statist perspective. Proceeding from this, the students also benefit by understanding the patterns in art and architecture in terms of religious influence and the concepts employed therein. This is particularly evident in her linkages on the saints and the pilgrimage tradition and the temples. There is a similar understanding of Mughal art i.e. enriched by the early European encounter where a new set of aesthetics was introduced into the Mughal court. This area is treated well and many paintings are taken up as examples that show the adoption of European motifs.

In the last section, she takes up the rise of the Europeans and gives a clear picture of the European penetration and the process of their rise at the cost of the loss of sovereignty of the local powers. It also accounts for the transition to modernity. The sections are brief and it would have been better to have a larger volume to explain all developments in detail.



Overall, the book is a well written work and is highly recommended for all students and is a useful value addition for the students at the undergraduate level as it familiarizes them with the main currents of medieval Indian history.

**Dr. M.N. Rajesh**

*Reader, Centre for Women's Studies  
University of Hyderabad*

## **BOOK REVIEW - II**

### **IDEOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT SITUATING THE ORIGIN OF VEDIC CULTURE**

**RAMENDRA NATH NANDI**

*Aakar, New Delhi, 2009.*

The book under review is a valuable contribution to the field of Aryan studies and in a large measure supplements the author's earlier work published in 2001 (*Aryans Revisited*, 2001). The eleven chapters of the book present a well knit discourse, each of the chapters bringing plentiful new evidence and explanations to bear on the subject. In the introductory chapter the author underlines an organic link between the ideology of nature worship detailed in the *Rgveda* and a long period of geo-climatic disorders and social anarchy borne out by textual as well as archaeological material. The author rightly argues that the traditional time frame of the *Rgveda* (1500-1000BC) places the millennial oral text in a virtual social void with no explanation for what the text rolls out in different portions of the compositions. Many questions remain unanswered like what motivated the earliest Vedic speakers of South Asia to formulate, calibrate, preserve and transmit, generation after generation, a system of an ideology divinizing, pleasing and placating the various forces of nature. There is no explanation either as to why the text attaches so much importance to the capture and control of walled resource centers, fertile agricultural land and adjoining water bodies. There is no explanation also of the large

mass of evidence relating to maritime activity, particularly overseas trading journeys undertaken not only by human beings but also by the gods themselves, the last one in a manner of emphasizing the importance of maritime journeys to the earliest Vedic speakers.

The author also draws attention to the frequent use of the terms, ‘five people (*pancha jana*) or seven peoples (*sapta manus*) by the Vedic poets to describe five or more divergent segments of Vedic speakers, all subscribing to a common liturgy and speaking a common language but observing diverse ways of life. Like in his earlier work, he dismisses on textual authority the misinformed idea that *Arya* or Aryans always represented a light skinned people and the *Das* always a dark skinned people. He draws attention to a mega ruler of the Swat Valley, who describes himself as an emperor (*samrat*), and *Arya* and dark skinned. Likewise, the chief priests of the Swat Valley all belonging to the lineage of the poet Kanva are described in the text as Syama and Krsna, both meaning dark skinned. He further shows that the Kanvas spoke a degraded version of the Vedic dialect with many uncharacteristic nominal and verbal declensions, the examples of which are plentiful in the eighth book of the *Rgveda*. These findings almost establish beyond any doubt the author’s submission that all Vedic speakers, far from being homogenous, were divergent ethnic communities.

Chapter one of the book undertakes a detailed discussion of the problems of original text, text variation, stratification, social location, the problem of identity and the importance of myths. Also discussed are the problems of paleo-linguistic dating and the uncertainty of dates in archaeology. In the second chapter he draws attention to the fact that the problem of Indo-

Europeanism is basically derived from the European quest (particularly in Western Europe) for a superior and non-Semitic racial descent and, accordingly, connects their origin to a supposedly superior Aryan race. On Max Muller's retraction of his own theory, the author states that the *Arya* represents neither a race nor a language. If anything, it represented a religious ideology relating to divination and invocation of the different forces of nature, probably on account of stressful conditions of life. The author draws rather heavily on archeological and paleo-osteological information to state that there were no demographic shifts from Asia to Europe, though the other way round happened several times before 5000 BC and after 800 BC.

In the third chapter he undertakes a detailed discussion relating to the use of horses and chariots by the Aryans of the *Rgveda*. The term chariot or *ratha* in the *Rgveda* means any cart or carriage drawn by horses, donkeys, bullocks, camels, goats and even dogs. There are instances of warriors using bullock carts in battles as well as for transport of goods and passengers. The next four chapters deal with environmental crisis, decay of settlements, decline of urban places, wide spread famines and starvation. Valuable information on the ideology of nature worship and the role of priests in the propagation of this ideology are examined in the following two chapters, while the last two chapters deal with the problem of ethnicity and dialect variation.

**Dr. S N Arya**

*Associate Professor of History  
Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya*