

HISTORY OF MUTTS IN THONDAIMANDALAM – A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The region comprises the districts which formed a part of the traditional Pallava Kingdom. The boundaries of Thondaimandalam are ambiguous - include Chennai, Kanchipuram, Tiruvallur, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai and the Northern part of Villupuram district in Thondaimandalam, and group the Southern part of Villupuram District, the Union Territory of Pondicherry and Cuddalore District under a separate region called "Nadu Naadu" in Thondaimandalam. A larger Thondaimandalam include all of these. Also, The Thondaimandalam region extend to cover Chittoor and Nellore districts which is now in Andhra Pradesh. Kacheepuram is a city of temples; some of the most important temples in Kancheepuram are for Sri Kamakshi Ambal, Sri Ekambaranatha, Sri Varadaraja, Sri Kailasanathar, Sri Vaikunta Perumal, Ulakalantha Perumal, etc. Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple at Tiruvannamalai is one of the most ancient Temples of Lord Siva in Tamil Nadu. Many ancient rulers of South India have contributed to the development of this Temple. The Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandiyas, the Kadavarayas, the Banas, the Hoysalas, the Rayas of Vijayanagar, and the Nayaks of Thanjavur have altered, extended and developed the vast Temple complex for nearly a thousand years. The 500 inscriptions of Tiruvannamalai clearly bring out the history of the construction and development of the mighty structure of the Temple.

Keywords: Pallava Kingdom, Thondaimandalam, Cholas, the Pandiyas.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thondaimandalam also known as Thondai Nadu is a historical region located in the northernmost part of Tamil Nadu. The region comprises the districts which formed a part of the traditional Pallava Kingdom. The boundaries of Thondaimandalam are ambiguous - include Chennai, Kanchipuram, Tiruvallur, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai and the northern part of Villupuram District in Thondaimandalam, and group the Southern part of Villupuram District, the Union Territory of Pondicherry and Cuddalore District under a separate region called "Nadu Naadu" in Thondaimandalam. A larger Thondaimandalam include all of these. Also, The Thondaimandalam region extend to cover Chittoor and Nellore Districts which is now in Andhra Pradesh.

HISTORY OF THONDAIMANDALAM

Early days this region was ruled by the tribal chiefs who also called as Irular or Aravar. It then came under the rule of Cholas during first century CE. The capital of Tondai Nadu is Kanchipuram. In the 3rd century CE, Thondai Nadu was ruled by **Ilandiraiyan**, the first king with the title "**Tondaiman**", whom P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar identifies with a **Pallava** Prince. The medieval Pallavas ruled Andhra and Northern Tamil Nadu, from the 4th to the 9th centuries, with their seat of capital at ancient Kanchipuram. When the ancient King Adondai captured Thondainadu, he brought Vellalars from Srisailam.

Thondai Nadu is the region north of the Kaveri basin, around Palar river basin. It was captured by the Second Chola Monarch, Aditya (R. CA. 871-907). He defeated the armies of the Pallavas of Kanchipuram and claimed all of Thondai Nadu as Chola territory. Thondai Nadu included Chittoor and Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh

KANCHI KAMAKOTI PEETHAM

Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham is a Hindu monastic institution, located in Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu. Kanchipuram is one of the five pancha-bhUta-sthalas ("Temples denoting the five elements"). The five pancha-bhUta-sthalas or material sites represent Earth (Kanchipuram), Sky (Chidambaram), Air (Kalahasti), Fire (Thiruvannamalai), and Water (Thiruvanaikoil). It is known as Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, and the head of the math is referred to as a "Sankaracharya".

HISTORY

The Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham claims that its founder was the 8th century philosopher Adi Shankaracharya, but the veracity of this claim is not certain. The common view among modern scholars is that the institution may have been founded by either him or one of his disciples. Scholars such as William Cenkner, Christopher Fuller and David Smith acknowledge that the institution's link to Adi Shankaracharya is disputed, but nevertheless, recognize that the Kanchi Shankaracharya's are his direct "spiritual descendants".

The 70th Shankaracharya, Vijayendra Saraswathi Swamigal is the current pontiff, before which, the mutt was headed by Jayendra Saraswathi, the 69th Shankaracharya. Before him it was headed by Chandrasekharendra Saraswati. The Brindavan of Chandrasekarendra Saraswathi is worshipped here.

The Kamakoti Peetham however, traditionally refers to Kamakshi, referred popularly as Kamakoti referring to Goddess Durga. Kancheepuram is referred to as Kanchi. The Vyakarana Mahabhashya of Patanjali uses the word 'Kanchi' and it can be thus understood that the word Kanchi also has a Sanskrit base. Under the guidance of Sureshvarachaya, Adi Shankara appointed Sarvajnatman as the second Peetadhipathi.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MUTTS**ORGIN**

In February 1897, Swami Vivekananda returned to Calcutta from the West. At Madras, when devotees requested Swamiji to start a permanent centre, Swamiji had said, 'I shall send you one who is more orthodox than the most orthodox Brahmins of the South and who is at the same time incomparable in performing worship, scriptural knowledge and meditation on God'. He meant Swami Ramakrishnananda, who was sent in March 1897.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MUTTS IN 1907

Biligiri Iyengar, the owner of the Ice House, died in 1902. Owing to financial problems the proprietors of the Ice House building decided to auction it in 1906. After the Ice House was sold out, Swami Ramakrishnananda shifted to an outhouse in the rear portion of the Ice House. He spent almost a year in that small room, until the new Math building was built at Mylapore, on a piece of land donated by a devotee. The Swami moved into the new building on 17 November 1907. This Math building constructed by Swami Ramakrishnananda no longer exists. It was unfortunate that within 2 years after its construction, extensive cracks developed in the roof of the building. One of the cracks was above the Shrine Room, and when there was sudden rainfall one night, Swami Ramakrishnananda held an umbrella over the Master's photo in the Shrine for the whole night. Soon after Swami Ramakrishnananda left Madras and Swami Sharvananda took charge in 1912, this building was demolished and the present two-storeyed building with a spacious front hall was constructed by 1917.

ICE HOUSE THE FIRST MONASTERY

The Ice House (now Vivekanandar Illam), otherwise known as Castle Kernan and situated in the Triplicane sea-beach, is a three-storeyed structure owned then by a prosperous advocate, Sri Biligiri Iyengar. It was there that Swami Vivekananda had stayed on his return from the West when he was given a historic reception by the citizens of Madras. Sri Iyengar who was a good devotee, now placed the ground floor at the Swami's disposal. Swami Ramakrishnananda moved to Ice House and started his activities. He set up a shrine for Sri Ramakrishna and would do regular worship there. While at the Ice House, Swami Ramakrishnananda started an orphanage for the destitute children which has now grown into a large institution called Ramakrishna Mission Students Home, Mylapore. The Ice House served as the first monastery of the Ramakrishna Movement in South India for 9 years.

TIRUVANNAMALAI

The history of Tiruvannamalai revolves around the Annamalaiyar Temple. The recorded history of the town dates back to the ninth century, as seen from a Chola inscriptions in the temple. Further inscriptions made before ninth century indicate the rule of Pallava kings, whose capital was Kanchipuram. The seventh century Nayanar saints Sambandar and Appar wrote of the temple in their poetic work, Tevaram. Sekkizhar, the author of the Periyapuramam records both Appar and Sambandar worshiped Annamalaiyar in the temple. The Chola Kings ruled over the region for more than four centuries, from 850 to 1280, and were temple patrons. The inscriptions from the Chola King record various gifts like land, sheep, cow and oil to the temple commemorating various victories of the dynasty.

TIRUVANNAMALAI MUTTS**RAMANA ASHRAM**

Ramana Maharshi was born as Venkataraman in Tiruchuli in the year 1879 on 30th December to Sundaram Aiyar and Alagammal. Following sudden demise of his father at early age, the family of Venkataram shifted to Madurai when he had his schooling. A casual talk with his uncle regarding a place call Arunachala cast its spell on the young mind of Venkataraman. He took fascination to this place.

At the age of Seventeen, Venkataraman was sitting alone in his uncle's house when all of a sudden, the thought of death occurred to him. He went to Samadhi at that time and got his spiritual enlightenment. Following this Venkataraman took the train to Arunachala in the year of 1896 and started his life in Tiruvannamalai and started his spiritual journey. Very soon word about the saintliness of Venkataraman reached far and wide. A great sanskritscholat by name Ganapati Sastri visited 'Venkataraman' in the year 1903. Seeing the grace and divinity he called 'Venkarataman' as Ramana Maharshi. Ganapati composed hymns in Sanskrit in praise of the sage, and also wrote the Ramana-Gita explaining his teachings.

Ramana Maharashi never left Arunachala and Tiruvannamalai though he received invitations from across the world. Most of the time Ramana Maharshi used to sit in silence the devotees also so used to sit in silence in his presence. Once in a while he used to answer questions of devotees regarding spirituality and enlightenment. The very presence of Ramana Maharshi brought peace and tranquillity to the people around him.

SESHADRI SWAMIGAL ASHRAM

Seshadri Swamy Ashram is another important spiritual destination in the Holy Town of Arunachalam. Seshadri Swami is known for his miraculous golden hand, whatever he touches everything used to flourish. He is a master of all sacred text of Tamil and Sanskrit.

He was known for his spiritual eminence. Not much has been written about Seshadri swamigal. It was **Seshadri Swamigal** who introduced Ramana Maharshi to this world. Local people compare him to Goddess Parvati and Ramana Maharshi as Subramanya (son of Parvathi).

It is said that he is one of the greatest saint of 20th century who believed in following ascetic way of life to reunion with god. He was a great worshiper of Shakthi.

POONDI SAMIAR ASHRAM

Pooni Samiar Ashram can be categorised under Religious places and is a popular tourist place in Tiruvannamalai. This Pooni Samiar Ashram draws huge crowds from the neighbouring places of Chennai, Arcot, Vellore, Madurai, Arni, Coimbatore, Kanyakumari, Ooty, Rameshwaram, Tiruvannamalai. Some of the other tourist places in the city of Tiruvannamalai - Arunachala Temple, Girivalam, Ramana Ashramam, Seshadri Swamigal Ashram, Yogi Ramsuratkumar, Pooni Samiar Ashram, Sathanur Dam, Devikapuram, Parvatha Malai, Gingee Fort, Jawadhu Hills.

YOGI RAMSURATKUMAR

Yogi Ramsuratkumar was born in a village near Kashi on December 1st 1918. Right from his childhood, he had spiritual inclination and met a lot of yogis and monks. His first spiritual guru Sri Arubindo advised him to meet Swami Ramana Maharishi. Later after staying in Swami Ramdas Ashram in Kerala he reached Tiruvannamalai

OBJECTIVES

The religious history of Tamilnadu is influenced by Hinduism quite notable during the medieval century. The twelve Azhwars (saint poets of Vaishnavite tradition) and sixty-three Nayanars (saint poets of Saivite tradition) are regarded as exponents of the Bhakti tradition of Hinduism in South India. Most of them came from the Tamil region and the last of them lived in the 9th century CE.

Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple at Tiruvannamalai is one of the most ancient Temples of Lord Shiva in Tamil Nadu. Many ancient rulers of South India have contributed to the development of this Temple. The Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandiyas, the Kadavarayas, the Banas, the Hoysalas, the Rayas of Vijayanagar, and the Nayaks of Thanjavur have altered, extended and developed the vast Temple complex for nearly a thousand years. The 500 inscriptions of Tiruvannamalai clearly bring out the history of the construction and development of the mighty structure of the Temple.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Shri Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham was established by Sri Adi Sankara in the year 482 B.C. and has the distinction of an unbroken line of 70 Acharyas (spiritual leaders). On this web site, we present you with several aspects of Sanatana Dharma, Hindusim and Advaita Vedanta.

“Hindu Dharma” is a book published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which contains English translation of two volumes of the Tamil Book “Deivatthin Kural”, which is a collection of invaluable and engrossing speeches of Sri Sri Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Maha Swamiji. Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple with its massive walls of thirty feet in height looks like a fortified citadel of a great emperor. It has nine towers, fifty-six courtyards, numerous Shrines and countless idols, made of both metals and stone. There are two main holy tanks and five broad prakarams in the Temple. It contains seven Mandapams; from a small four pillared Vasantha Mandapam in the third prakaram to the thousand Pillared Mandapam in the fifth prakaram. There are beautiful images, sculptures, pillars, drawings and pictures in the Temple. In the Temple of Tiruvannamalai (as Skandananda states) sculptures adoring the various shrines, towers and Mandapams, are of the purest Dravidian style and are consequently of great beauty.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. A Bothe archaeological and literary source has been consulted to mark this study authentic in the temple of Thirukoilur Ulagalanda Perumal inscription have been found and recorded by the archaeological department. These records shed valuable light on the antiquity, religious history of the people of this place in the past.
2. Edited by heather sandeman. “Guru and Disciple”, Found in the Swami Gnananda Early Life, and The meaning of Tapovanam. And also Sadh Guru Gnananda edited by M.P Pandit, and Guna Inba Veli edited by Gnanananda memorial Trust, are given to the clear and full History of Swami Gnananandagiri and Gnanananda Tapovanam.
3. Further the Sthala Puranam of Thirukoilur Ulagalanda Perumal temple edited by A.V Rangachari, has given more information on the early History of Thirukoilur. Edited by Srinivasacharya, Sri Math Manavala Mamunigal Vaibavam has given the information of Jeeyar and our Life History.
4. And also edited by N. Durai Ranga Ramanujadasar, Thirukoilur on rana Sri Math Emperumanar Jeeyar Swami, have been founded to the History of Jeeyar, and Jeeyar Mutt, and List of Jeeyar’s in the Mutt.
5. Edited by V. Radhakrishnam “Sangaralinga Swamigal Ashram” given the Information of Sangaralinga Swamigal and Sangaralinga Swamigal Ashram. Moreover, personal interviews with the Authorities. As well as the priest and Devotees of Sangaralinga Swamigal.
6. Sri “Sivaprakasa Swamikal Varalaru” by Kumarasiva Rajendiran. Is given too many information on Sri Sivaprakasa Swamigal, and his life history and his greatness and others. And also "Sivaprakasa Swamigal Seerthi Malai Thirattu" edited by A. Sivalinganar has given more information at about Sivaprakasa Swamigal history and the history of Thirumadam.

3. METHODOLOGY

History aims to discover the truth about the past, and some guidelines for the person in search of that truth have been discovered. Some basic requirements (objectivity and honesty) and some generally helpful guidelines (the earliest sources are likely to be better; original documents are preferable to interpretations), many of them known already in antiquity, are associated in the West with the name of Leopold von Ranke. Some of Ranke's maxims are here combined as a quick

introduction to the study of the past. They are followed by advice for the beginner, and notes on some of the difficulties in the process of recovering the past, in Ranke's words, "as it really was." What use the modern age may make of that recovered information is another matter altogether.

HISTORY OF MUTTS IN THONDAIMANDALAM

The Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham claims that its founder was the 8th century philosopher Adi Shankaracharya, but the veracity of this claim is not certain. The common view among modern scholars is that the institution may have been founded by either him or one of his disciples. The Kamakoti Peetham however, traditionally refers to Kamakshi, referred popularly as Kamakoti referring to Goddess Durga. Kancheepuram is referred to as Kanchi. The Vyakarana Mahabhashya of Patanjali uses the word 'Kanchi' and it can be thus understood that the word Kanchi also has a Sanskrit base. Under the guidance of Sureshvaracharya, Adi Shankara appointed Sarvajnatman as the second Peetadhipathi.

Srimat Deivasigamani Desiga Paramacharya Swamigal founded a Saiva Siddantha math at Tiruvannamalai, in North Arcot district. Later on, the disciples of the math, now called Kunnakudi Thiruvannamalai Mutt Adikam, settled down at Piranmalai. About 200 years ago, due to religious and administrative convenience and at the request of Sethupathi Raja of Ramnad, they shifted the activity to Kunnakudi in Tirupathur Taluk of the Ramanathapuram District. The math is the founder of the Adheenam had a very cordial relation with Vellala Maharaja and was the disciple of Arulnandi Sivacharya Swamigal, who established the Saiva Siddantha philosophy in Tamil Nadu. The temple maintains and administers the Shanmughanathar Temple.

ACTIVITIES OF MUTTS

CELEBRATIONS

The Birthdays (according to tithi) of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Ramakrishnananda are celebrated in a grand manner every year. The Birthdays of Gautama Buddha, Jesus Christ, Sri Sankara, Sri Ramanuja and Sri Chaitanya are also celebrated every year. The birthday celebrations are marked with special Puja, Homa, Chanting, Bhajans, Musical Programmes and Lectures. Special puja is also performed on Guru Purnima, Rama Navami, Ganesh Puja, Shivratri, Krishna Janmashtami, Navaratri, Kali Puja, Durga Puja, Lakshmi Puja, Saraswati Puja and other auspicious days. As part of the National Youth Day celebrations, this year All India level Short film contest has been announced.

PUBLICATION

The Madras Math is today the largest publication house of the Ramakrishna Order. The Math currently publishes 292 titles in English, 333 in Tamil and 17 in Sanskrit/English

The Math published its first major book - Swami Vivekananda's Inspired Talks, in 1909. In the same year was published Swami Ramakrishnananda's Universe and Man. In 1909 came his next book Krishna: Pastoral and King-maker followed by The Soul of Man in 1910.

In 1912 was published a translation of the first volume of the Bengali Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita under the title The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. About a decade later Swami Ashokananda translated the second volume. Swami Sharvananda translated eight principal Upanishads and the series become most popular. In 1920 he translated the first part of Swami Saradananda's Sri Sri Ramakrishna Leela Prasanga. Its English title was Sri Ramakrishna, the Great Master (1952).

The complete text of the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, translated by Swami Nikhilananda was published in 1944 and of Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master, translated by Swami Jagadananda in 1952. Swami Tapasyananda translated into English a great many Sanskrit texts, including Srimad Bhagavata published in 4 volumes in the year 1980. Another of his books, The Bhakti Schools of Vedanta (1990), has been much acclaimed by scholars.

The Math publishes 2 monthly journals: The Vedanta Kesari in English and Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam in Tamil. The Vedanta Kesari was started in 1914 and has over the years built up a good reputation for its authenticity and scholarship. Sri Ramakrishna Vijayam, started in 1921, has today the largest circulation among religious journals in Tamil.

EDUCATIONAL WORK

The Math's educational activities were initiated by Swami Ramakrishnananda even during the Ice House days. Moved by the pitiable condition of a few boys who had lost all their relatives in Plague Epidemic, Swami Ramakrishnananda felt that something must be done for the relief and rehabilitation of this type of orphans. The foundation stone for the new

building was laid by Swami Brahmananda on 16 May 1917 and the orphanage moved to its new building in May 1921. In 1922 a residential high school was started so that the orphans could study within the campus itself.

Swami Ramakrishnananda was also the inspiration behind the National Girls School, George Town. The Math took over its management in 1921. In 1932 a school for boys was started at T. Nagar. The Girls High School, Sri Sarada Vidyalaya, at T. Nagar was taken over by the Math in 1938, and additional wings like an elementary school, a training school and hostels were incorporated. In June 1946 was started the Vivekananda College at Mylapore.

Since the educational activity has expanded enormously, the institutions have been divided into separate Ramakrishna Mission centres for facilitating efficient administration. Under the Madras Math's direct control there are at present:

Sri Ramakrishna Math Vivekananda Centenary Girls Higher Secondary School with 670 students.

Sri Ramakrishna Math National School Chennai – 79 with 520 students.

A public library with 32,000 books and 300 periodicals.

A Book bank providing academic books for 300 engineering students.

MEDICAL SERVICE

- A charitable allopathic-cum-homeopathic dispensary with General, Dental, Eye, ENT, Surgical, X-Ray, Ultrasound scanning, Paediatrics, ECG, Gynaecology, Physiotherapy and Laboratory Sections, and clinics for TB and diabetes. About 220,000 cases are treated annually.
- A weekly mobile medical unit, which treats 10,000 cases annually.
- Prevention of Disability (POD) and rehabilitation camps for 300 Leprosy Affected Persons (LAPS).
- Regular eye camps in nearby villages.

RELIEF AND REHABILITATION

The history of the Ramakrishna Order's relief services is as old as that of the Mission itself. Besides their multifarious permanent constructive works, from their very inception, the Ramakrishna Math and the Ramakrishna Mission have been ever ready to promptly organise ameliorative and healing services whenever the nation has been faced with sudden calamities caused by freaks of nature, follies of men, or scourges of epidemics. Its relief activities have also extended well beyond Indian borders.

For the 1897 famine in Bengal, Swami Ramakrishnananda appealed for funds in the Brahmavadin and sent a substantial amount for the relief work. In 1928 and twenty later, in 1948, when some huts caught fire at Mylapore, the Math organised prompt aid and relief. The Math created a colony for the 100 affected families with the help of plot of land given by the Government. It was named Ramakrishnapuram. The following are the major relief activities undertaken by the Math.

ADMINISTRATION SERVICES OF MUTTS

The Ramakrishna Math was registered as a Trust in 1901. The management of the Math is vested in a Board of Trustees who are only monks. The Math with its branches is a distinct legal entity. It has well-defined rules of procedure. It lays emphasis on religious practices and preaching of Dharma. The Math has its own separate funds and keeps detailed accounts which are annually audited by qualified chartered accountants.

In consultation with the senior monks of the Order, the Trustees elect from among themselves a President, one to three Vice Presidents, a General Secretary and four Assistant Secretaries. The President, also called the 'Sanghaguru' is the supreme Head of the whole organization and the sole authority to confer Samnyasa or administering the monastic vow. The Presidents, Vice Presidents (or the Head of a foreign centre) are also empowered to give initiation or Mantra Diksha to devotees aspiring for it.

The General Secretary is the administrative head of the organization. However, his power is limited to implementing the decisions taken by the Trustees/Members of the Governing Body, though he has the freedom to act in matters of day-to-day administration. The Assistant Secretaries work under his guidance.

The individual centres of the Math are managed by the Adhyaksha and of the Mission, by the secretaries, duly appointed by the Trustees/Members of the Governing Body. These again, are expected to carry on their work with the assistance of the monastic members allotted to their centres as also volunteers and paid-workers.

As on 31 March 2014, there were 409 monastic members, 254 lay members, and 181 lay associates.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES OF MUTTS

A short term Refresher Training Course is conducted for Archakas and Othuvans serving in the temples in Tamil Nadu to improve their day-to-day services. Similarly, it has been planned to conduct refresher training programme for other Ulthurai Servants and Executive Officers, on the important topics like, Saiva, Vaishnava Agamas, Festivals, History of Saivism and Vaishnavism, Panniru Thirumurais, Nalayira Divya Prabhandham, and the significance of Sthala Varalaru and Sthala Puranam of the temples.

TAMIL ARCHANAI

Performing archanai for the deities in temples during worship is considered as primary by the devotees. This Government has taken steps to encourage the Archanais performed by the devotees in their mother tongue Tamil.

“Archanai Potri” books for the deities in the temples were prepared and published in the year 1997.

Now these Tamil Archanai Potri books have been reprinted and published. These “Archanai Potri” Books are distributed free for the Archakars serving in temples and sold for the public for a low cost.

Further, in order to publicise the facility of worshipping by performing archanai in Tamil in temples, phrases such as “Archanai will be performed in Tamil” are displayed in conspicuous places in temples.

AGAMAS IN TAMIL

Deciding to translate and publish the Agamas of the temples, from Sanskrit into Tamil, “Uthara Kamika Agama” was translated and published in the year 1999 for the first time. Following this, “Aalaya Nirmana Pimbhalakshana” - a book on sculpture and a book named “Kumara Thanthiram” have been translated and published in Tamil. Steps have been taken to translate and publish a few more Temple related Sanskrit books into Tamil.

FESTIVALS TO HONOUR OF TAMIL SAVANTS

“Theiva Sekkizhar’s Festival is celebrated as a Government function every year in the Tamil month of Vaikasi in Kunrathur his birth place near Chennai, by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department.

Similarly, to honour Saint Thirugnana Sambandar, ‘Thirugnana Sambandar Isai Vizha’ is celebrated every year at Arulmigu Vedagirieswarar temple, Thirukazhukundram.

“Arulalar Arunagirinadhar Vizha” is celebrated in Arulmigu Arunachaleswarar Temple, Thiruvannamalai to honour saint Arunagirinadhar.

Apart from these festivals, it has been ordered to celebrate specially festivals in Honour of all the other Nayanmars and Alwars on the day of their birth or Mukthi every year in the temples related to them.

STHALAVARALARU AND STHALAPURANAM

Sthalavaralaru and Sthalapuram are published by the temples to enable the public to know about the History, Purana, Architecture, The Stone Inscriptions, etc., and about the speciality of worshipping the concerned temples. For the temples having no such history or Purana, steps have been taken to publish pamphlets and brochures about their significance.

ANNADHANA SCHEME

The Scheme of providing Annadhanam is implemented in 360 temples for providing free meal every day at noon to the devotees visiting the temples

SPIRITUAL AND MORAL CLASSES

In 485 temples including the temples where Annadhana Scheme is implemented, Spiritual and Moral Instruction classes are conducted by scholars on every Sunday evening for the children to inculcate spirituality, ethics and discipline. From October 2008 the Classes have been extended as also to be conducted on Saturdays in these temples.

KARUNAI ILLAMS

Karunai Illams are conducted by the temples to provide food, education and shelter for the orphan children. Totally 843 children (554 boys & 289 girls) in the 34 Karunai Illams run by 31 temples are being benefited. The Government is providing a grant of Rs. 467/- for every child towards maintenance.

SETTING UP NEW LIBRARIES AT TEMPLES

For the benefit of the devotees, it has been ordered to start libraries utilising the Temple funds at 114 important temples where funds and space are available. Steps have been taken to improve the libraries wherever they are already available.

YOGA CLASSES AT TEMPLES

With an aim of maintaining the Health, Body and Mind of the Public/Devotees, it has been ordered to conduct training classes every day morning for Yoga and Meditation through qualified instructors at clean and comfortable places in 52 affluent temples.

SOCIAL SERVICES OF MUTTS

- 1) The Hindu mutts in south India, till recently forbidden to members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are now accessible to Harijans.
- 2) A majority of the mutts have launched massive campaigns for social work among the Harijans and the poor.
- 3) Mutts have also become increasingly open to widows, earlier barred because of the religious stigma attached to them.
- 4) The taboo on travel by heads of mutts no longer exists. They now jet around the country and abroad, ignoring the ancient Hindu texts which ordained that sanyasis are not supposed to use vehicular transport.
- 5) The Kanchi mutt was always known as a Brahmin mutt. But now it is mainly non-Brahmins - Nadars and Gounders for instance - who are seen with the head, Swami Jayendra Saraswati.
- 6) In the process, he eased the centuries-old rigidity of the math restricting itself to the service of the Lord and study of the scriptures, and moved out to address the needs of the people in terms of education, health etc.
- 7) Another significant aspect of his tenure was the Kanchi Math's increased proximity to power. He took initiatives to resolve the Ayodhya temple issue and held talks with all stakeholders, including Muslim representatives.

OTHER SERVICES OF MUTTS

Sri Ramakrishna Math, with assistance from Direct-Relief International and GlaxoSmithKline runs a One Year Nurse Assistant Training programme.

The programme was started in the year 2004 following the Indian Ocean tsunami. A need was felt to empower the local young women of the tsunami affected districts. So far, 1200 nurses have graduated in the last four years and currently 300 girl students are undergoing training in various Nursing Training Institutions in Chennai.

The Math conducts free computer training courses for rural girls in Tiruvallur District.

The mission has its own Hospitals, Charitable Dispensaries, Maternity Clinics, Tuberculosis Clinics, and Mobile Dispensaries. It also maintains training centres for nurses. Orphanages and Homes for the elderly are included in the mission's field of activities, along with rural and tribal welfare work.

4. CONCLUSION

The region comprises the districts which formed a part of the traditional Pallava Kingdom. The boundaries of Thondaimandalam are ambiguous - include Chennai, Kanchipuram, Tiruvallur, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai and the Northern part of Villupuram district in Thondaimandalam, and group the Southern part of Villupuram District, the Union Territory of Pondicherry and Cuddalore District under a separate region called "Nadu Naadu" in Thondaimandalam. A larger Thondaimandalam include all of these. Also, The Thondaimandalam region extend to cover Chittoor and Nellore districts which is now in Andhra Pradesh.

Kacheepuram is a city of temples; some of the most important temples in Kancheepuram are for Sri Kamakshi Ambal, Sri Ekambaranatha, Sri Varadaraja, Sri Kailasanathar, Sri Vaikunta Perumal, Ulakalantha Perumal, etc.

Sri Arunachaleswarar Temple at Tiruvannamalai is one of the most ancient Temples of Lord Siva in Tamil Nadu. Many ancient rulers of South India have contributed to the development of this Temple. The Pallavas, the Cholas, the Pandiyas, the Kadavarayas, the Banas, the Hoysalas, the Rayas of Vijayanagar, and the Nayaks of Thanjavur have altered, extended and developed the vast Temple complex for nearly a thousand years. The 500 inscriptions of Tiruvannamalai clearly bring out the history of the construction and development of the mighty structure of the Temple.

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