

## A STUDY ON ENDOWMENTS AND GRANTS TO THE TEMPLE IN THE MEDIEVAL SOCIETY OF PALLAVA PERIOD IN TAMILNADU

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With the extinction of the Kalabhra rule, the Pallavas emerged as a new political force unknown to Sangam politics in Tondai Mandalam region. They played a very notable role in the History of South India for more than five centuries in Tamilnadu. The temple became a major institution in Tamilnadu. The religious life of the people centered around the local temple. Temples provide solace and comfort to the people besides appeasing their inner urges and the search within.

### **Kings Endowment**

The Pallava kings constituted an important part in the Tamil society. They were god fearing and they were keen in protecting the subjects and in promoting dharma. They were called as *dharmamaharajas*, *adhirajas*. Each and every one of the Pallava kings were of a religious temperament. They were tolerant towards their subjects and stood as defenders and protectors of different faiths that prevailed in the kingdom. The kings made a number of endowments to the temple because they might have felt that by appropriating the deity they could atone for all atrocities they committed in the war.<sup>1</sup> The kings not only built most of these temples; but made liberal endowments for the regular services and special festivities. The large tracts of lands were granted to big and small temples by kings. They were called as *devadanams* which either partly or fully exempted from taxes. In the early Pallava grants, the orders of the village or land gifts as Devadana which issued by the king himself to his officials with instructions to make a note of the gift in the register and to grant the village all kinds of immunities making it an entirely tax-free village.<sup>2</sup>

The royal gifts can be classified into *svadatti*<sup>3</sup> and *paradatti*<sup>4</sup>. In the later Pallava grants the *paradatti* gifts are those where someone acts as *vijnapati* or petition and some other as *ajnapati*. In the early Pallava period, the royal land donations made to the Brahmins is comparatively more than that to the temple. Gift of villages formed an important source of revenue to the temple. It placed the temples on permanent financial status. There are only few instances of village grants to temples during the reign of Pallavas. The earliest known copper plate inscription in Tamil and the earliest village grant to the religious institution which issued by Simhavarman in his 6<sup>th</sup> regnal year of 550 A.D was Pallankovil grant. It records the grant of the village Amanserkkai at Perunagarnadu in Venkunrakkottam and

Sixteen and half patti of land in Tamar to Vajranandikkuravar, a Jaina teacher of Paruttikkunru as *pallichchandam*.<sup>5</sup>

The boundaries of donated village were clearly mentioned in the inscription. Narabhaya, the minister figures as the ajnapati of the grant. It indicates the spirit of tolerance that prevailed among the members of the Pallava royal family towards the other religious sects. The Kuram plates of Pallava king were Paramesvaravarman I which state that the endowment of a village Paramesvaramangalam as a devadana brahmadeyam. This village was divided into twenty five shares out of which twenty shares given to the Brahmins, three shares for performing puja in the temple for the worship, the bathing of idol flowers, perfumes, incense, lamps, oblations, conches and drums.<sup>6</sup> One share for reciting the Mahabharata in the temple, and one share for bringing water and fire to the mandapa at Kuram. It is interesting to note that this grant makes provision for the exposition of the Mahabharata along with the daily worship of Siva in the Kuram temple. During the period of Dantivarman at the request of a certain Kaduvetti Muttaraiyan, an endowment of four patti of land made to the old temple of Vishnu called Tirumerrali at Iraiyancheri in Conjeevaram Taluk of Chingleput. An inscription in the Parthasarathi temple at Triplicane in Madras which describes Dantivarman as the ornament of the Pallava family and records a gift of land.<sup>7</sup>

The donor of Velurpalayam grant is Nandivarman III was the grandson of Nandivarman II. He was a great devotee of Siva. His reign witnessed the ascendancy of Saivism. In this case, the complete proprietorship rights over the village were not given to the donees. Only the kings' income from the village is diverted to the religious institution. The village of Tirukattupalli which was donated by Nandivarman, the Pallava king to the temple of Mahadeva at Velurpalayam in 852 A.D. The Velurpalayam plates which clearly state that taxes and immunities received by the king within the jurisdiction of the village were now assigned to the temple and not the ownership of the village.<sup>8</sup> Nandippottaraiyar who defeated his enemies at Tellaru made a gift of land to the pidari temple of Mangalamat Niyamam. At the request of a Bana chieftain the village of Vikramaditya Chaturvedi Mangalam which was formed by clubbing together three villages was granted by Pallava Nandivarman III to the temple at Tiruvallam. Charitable endowments to the temple were entrusted either to the village assembly or to the authorities.<sup>9</sup> Many village donations made for the purpose of maintaining jointly the temple as well as the Brahmins were known as *devadana brahmadeya* villages. A copper plate inscription of Aparajitha of 879 A.D which refers to the royal grant of tax free devadana brahmadeya by clubbing Pudur with Melirunjeru as kani to the sabha of Melirunjeru stipulating that they should measure out 1000 *kadis* of paddy annually as panchavara to the deity Subrahmanya at Tiruttani at the instance of vama record in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Aparajithavarman which refers to a gift of land after purchase from a resident of Iganaimudur for offerings perfume, incense and for a perpetual lamp to the god Cholamalyisvara at Orrimudur i.e. Tiruvorriyur.<sup>10</sup> In the 25<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Vijayakampavikramavarman, mentioned a gift of land endowed to a deity called *Irunda Perumanadigal* as devadana and made tax free for conducting a festival for

seven days from visakanto tiruvonam in Vaikasi (May) every year. It was also necessary for the king to maintain properly the land donations previously made to the temple. At Tirukkalukkunram, Skandasisya, the Pallava king who gifted certain tax free land to the local temple and accordingly Narasingapottaraiyar Narasimhavarman I had to confirm the grant. Following this Rajakesarivarman Aditya I at the request of an individual maintained the grant like the former kings.<sup>11</sup>

There are occasional references to the grant of pallichchandams in the stone inscriptions of the later Pallava rulers such as those of Nandivarman II and Kampavarman. The status of women was fairly high in the upper strata of Pallava society. The Pallava queens were pious and made endowments to the temple. Charudevi one of the earliest Pallava queens of the heir-apparent Vijaya Buddhavarman made a gift of four nivartanas of land to a Vishnu temple at Dalura.<sup>12</sup> The royal ladies also made village grants after getting concurrence from the reigning king. An inscription from Manalurpet, South Arcot District registers a gift of village for offerings and lamp by a royal lady with the permission of her elder brother.<sup>13</sup>

### **The Feudal Chiefs of Grants and Endowments**

The medieval age had a Governmental polity made up of the kings and feudatories. The subordinate chieftains in the Tamil country were called as *feudatories*. Muttarayas and Banas were the notable feudatories under the Pallavas. The Muttarayas, the petty ruling chiefs who ruled the portions of modern Thanjavur and Thiruchirappalli, Sendalai,<sup>14</sup> a small village near Tirukkattupalli and Niyamam as centres of their activity. They were the feudatories of the later Pallava kings like Dantivarman and his successors. They also donated lands to temple. A Tirumayyam inscription refers to a Perumbidugu Perundevi, the mother of Sattan Maran and she repaired the Vishnu temple namely Satyagirinatha perumal temple at Tirumayyam and granted some lands for the upkeep of the temple. She granted it as a tax free gift inclusive of Karanmai, Kudimai and Miyatchirights. In the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Videlvidugu II alias Kuvavan Sattan (ie) in 804 A.D, the Sabhaiyar of Kiranur registered some lands as endowments for the conduct of festivals for the Perumanadigal of Uttamadanisvaram of Kiranur.<sup>15</sup> The Banas were originally feudatories of the Satavahanas and after the fall of them they became feudatories of the Pallavas of Kanchi. The Banas figure as feudatories of the Pallavas from the reign of Nandivarman II. Bana inscription from Gudimallam of the 23<sup>rd</sup> year of Nandivarman II Pallavamalla records a gift of land for a lamp to burn in the Paramesvara temple at Tiruvippirambedu (ie) Gudimallam. Another Bana inscription from Tiruvallam dated in the 62<sup>nd</sup> regnal year of Nandivarman II registers that Ratnavali, the beloved queen of Bana king Vijayaditya I made a gift of land to the temple at Vanapuram.<sup>16</sup> In the 4<sup>th</sup> year of Aparajithavarman Kumarandai Kurumbaradittan (alias) Kadu Pattipperaraiyan, the chief who had connection with the Pallavas made a gift of the village Turaiyur including its income in gold and puravu for conducting the worship in the temple of Matangesvara at Tirumatanganpalli in Tekkurnadu, a subdivision of Paiyyur Ilankottam. Another inscription belonged to the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Aparajithavarman records gift

of 1000 kulis of land in the village of Singapura to the god Tirumerralidevar at Nermali for sounding music during the sribali service by Sattandai Suthamallan alias Pallavaraiyan.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Officials of Endowment and Grants**

Many gifts to temples were made as a matter of routine by royal officials. Even minor officers made gifts. An inscription of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of year of Nandivarman, Sandippeliyar purchased one and half a veli of land called Vannakkavilagam from the assembly of Tribhuvanamadevi Chaturvedimangalam for burning a lamp and for offerings to the god Tiruvaigaudaiya mahadeva at Tribhuvanamadevi chaturvedimangalam as the surname of Tiruvaigavur in the Papanasam Taluk of Tanjore.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Common People of Endowments and Grants**

The donations and endowments coming from individual persons were another important source of wealth to the temples. Though small and meager, we find all classes of people donating lands according to the need of the temples and to the best of their capacity. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Nandivarman III, a resident of the village Tigaittirai built the temple of Tigaittirai vishnugriha at Kilinelur in Oymanadu and gave 2 pieces of land (seru) made tax free for providing offerings to the god.<sup>19</sup> In later inscriptions the god is called Virrirunda Perumal. Another inscription of the same period records the gift of 250 kulis of land free of tax in Nallur to the west of Simmali by Sadaiyan Attimallan of Simmali to Intalainadu for providing food offerings at the time of the mid-day worship to the deity Tirukkalisvarattu Mahadeva at Nallur, a brahmadeya in the same nadu.<sup>20</sup> An inscription issued during the reign of Nandivarman III refers to the grant of tax-free land Mummulaippatti at Ilayanur by Iruvarumma Vinnikkidiyar for some temple service record dated in the 5<sup>th</sup> year of Nandivarman III registers the gift of village for offerings and lamp to the Agastyesvara temple at Manalurpet, in Thirukkoyilur taluk, South Arcot district by Mahadevadigal, the daughter of Vanakovaraiyar Siddhavadavanar with the permission of her elder brother Vayirimeganar.<sup>21</sup>

During the reign of Nirpatunga, many land gifts were made. An epigraph of Nirpatunga in 871 A.D records a gift of six mass of land for providing offerings to the god Mahadeva at Pillaipakkam by a certain Ayyakkuttiyar for the merit of his elder brother Pillaipakkilar of Pillaipakkam at Sriperumbudur in Chingleput. In the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, Paliyili Sriyanaigai, the wife of Minavan Tamiladiyaraian made an endowment as archana bhogam to the Sattan of the sabha free gift of *kani* to the extent of 3 *velis* of land and for these stipulating that the land should be inalienable and that not only the taxes due there on be including irrigation taxes of every kind should be dedicated as offerings to the temple; but the land should be enjoyed by the Sattan of the sabha and his descendants.<sup>22</sup> If he failed or in case of the extent of the breach, the donee shall be liable to penalty of 25 kalanjus of gold to be paid to the temple. There is a reference from the inscription in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Nirpatunga, recording that Nangali Akkan, the daughter of Chendi residing at Alancheri in Alinadu raised a shrine at Nallur and endowed land for food offerings and a garden for a

festival on the day of tiruvadiraian chittirai (April).<sup>23</sup> An incomplete inscription found on slab lying near the Agastisvara temple at Achcharavakkam in Chingleput belonged to the period of Nripatungavarman records a gift of 800 kulis of land as Archana bhoga to provide for worship to the god Agastisvarar by a certain sankan. A fragmentary record of the same king registers a gift of 7 mas of land to the Siva temple at Pillaipakkam by a certain Padirikilar Singan.<sup>24</sup> record in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Aparajithavarman refers to a remission of taxes made by the sabha of Tiruttaniyal on 1000 kulis of land purchased by Nambi Appi from the villagers and given over to the Dharmigal for providing offerings and for burning 2 twilight lamps in the temple of Tiruvirattanattudeva in Tiruttani, Tiruttani division, Chittoor district.<sup>25</sup> The donor is evidently identical with the builder of the temple. An inscription issued during the reign of Vijaya kampavarman, Niranjanaguravar of Tiruvorriyur constructed the temple to Niranjanavarattu Mahadeva at Tiruvorriyur and made a gift of 20,000 kulis of land by purchase from the assembly of Manali for its upkeep.<sup>26</sup> Another inscription of the same king registers the agreement made by the Tirunamakkilavar of Ulaichcheri in Urukkadu to burn three lamps and to provide offerings to the God for the money and land received by them from Pusali Vamanan, a resident of the village. There is a reference from the inscription found on the North, West and South Walls of the Kailasanatha temple, Kilpulam, Arkonam Taluk, North Arcot District registers a gift of land made by Mullikkudaiyan Adittanali for conducting the sribali ceremony and for offerings during the three services the temple of Triukkulichcharattu Alvar at Palkalam in Damar Kottam with five persons one beating the gong (segandigai) and two for blowing the trumpets (kalam). The assembly of Palkalam entrusted the endowed land to Arayanichchingan, a drummer (uvachchan) residing in the village.<sup>27</sup> The land donation by individuals mainly of non-brahmins were in some cases made after getting concurrence from the reigning king. An inscription from Tiruvallam in 793 A.D states that a Goldsmith granted some land to a temple at Vanapuram after purchasing it from a manradi (Shepherd) and the Bana king permitted the grant after circumambulating the hamlet. The endowed properties were managed by the alumganathar or the mulaparushai or the amritaganattar of the temple.<sup>28</sup> The land donations to temples upto 700 A.D were very limited. Majority of them were given only by the kings, chieftains, and other royal members. Next to them, the Brahmins and their ladies and village assemblies the donated land belonged to the donor or was purchased from the individuals or from the village assemblies or was fallow land made fit for cultivation.<sup>29</sup>

The temples were great gifts of medieval Hinduism to the Tamil country. For the construction, maintenance and renovation of temples, the rulers, royal family members, village assemblies and chieftains lavishly granted lands for the conduct of festivals, regular prayers and pujas. Of all the benefactors, the kings of the medieval period involved themselves in the philanthropic and religious activities on a large scale so next to the rulers the temples were the chief land owners of the country. In the early Pallava period the land donations made to the Brahmins was more than that made to the temple; but in the later

Pallava period the temples received lots of land donations and gradually the temple became the biggest land holder.

### End Notes

1. Ananthi, B., *Crime and Punishment in Early Tamil Society*, Madurai, 2002, p.96.
2. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.44.
3. Svadatti: Indicates the gift made out of one's own will.
4. Paradatti: gift made at the request of others.
5. Thirty Pallava Copper plates, pp.18 -31.
6. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.44; A.R.E.,89/1921.
7. Chopra, P.N., *op.cit.*, p.66.
8. A.R.E.,1911-14, p.14.
9. S.I.I., Vol.III, No.43.
10. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.93; A.R.E., 180/1912.
11. A.R.E.,309/1969-70.
12. E.I., Vol.VIII, p.146.
13. A.R.E.,469/1937-38.
14. Rajalakshmi.R, *Tamil Polity*, Madurai, 1983, p.65.
15. I.P.S.,Part I, No.13.
16. S.I.I., Vol.III, Nos.42 and 43.
17. I.P.S.,Part I, No.15.
18. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.58
19. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.47.
20. A.R.E.,324/1992-93.
21. A.R.E.,169/1937-38
22. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.80, A.R.E.,172/1930.
23. A.R.E., 251/1967 -68.
24. S.I.I., Vol.XII No.81; A.R.E.,172 A/1929 -30
25. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.95; A.R.E., 435/1905.
26. S.I.I., Vol.XII No.105; A.R.E.,372/1911
27. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.114; A.R.E.,152/1916.
28. A.R.E., 47/1913.
29. S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.105.