



Review Article

Volume-04|Issue-07|2023

The Role of the Temples in Rayalaseema under Rayas of Vliayanagaram (From 1336 to 1565 A.D.) - A Socio Cultural Study

Dr. Mallela Nagendra*

Academic Consultant, Department of History, S.K. University, Ananthapur, India

Article History

Received: 06.07.2023

Accepted: 15.07.2023

Published: 29.07.2023

Citation

Nagendra, M. (2023). The Role of the Temples in Rayalaseema under Rayas of Vliayanagaram (From 1336 to 1565 A.D.) - A Socio Cultural Study. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(7), 1-4.

Abstract: Rayalaseema is the southern part of the state of Andhra Pradesh in southern India. During the Vijayanagara Empire many temples were built in the region. The temple was a symbol of the social life of the region and its social influence on the people of the area. It is observed that "in India temples are the treasure houses of the arts. They are the abodes of living gods. A temple is not a fortress of the priest or the monastery of an ascetic. It is the physical core as well as the soul of the community. Ananda Kumaraswamy has rightly observed that the Indian temple is the statement of radical experience and serves the purpose of the daily bread.

Keywords: Rayalaseema under Rayas, Temple, Culture and India

Copyright © 2023 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0).

INTRODUCTION

The Rayalaseema (erstwhile ceded district) area forms the southern part of the state of Andhra Pradesh. It consists of the district of Ananthapur, Kurnool, Kadapa and Chittoor. The region extends from 12° 3' to 16° 15' Northern latitudes and 76° 55' to 79° 55' Eastern longitudes. Rayalaseema, before formation of linguistic states included the Ballari (The present Karnataka State area) region. It is bounded by Mahaboobnagar (Andhra Pradesh) district on the north, Karnataka state on the west. The state of Tamilnadu on the south and the district of Nellore and Prakasham (Andhra Pradesh) formed the boundary of the East. It is central part of southern India forming part of neither the south nor the north. It is this peculiar geographical locations that makes' the study of its cultural, social and economic history very interesting has many socio, cultural political influence can be found here.

I have taken the period of study for this paper from 1336 A.D. to 1565 A.D. The year 1336 is important for the reason that the Vijayanagara Empire was started / founded in that year. Similarly, the year 1565 is taken for obvious reason that the mighty Vijayanagara Empire was collapsed in that year due to Tallikota war. In the history of Rayalaseema the temple became a symbolic representation of the various social activities under Raya's of Vijayanagar: For a modern researcher it is the largest repository where not only the religious but also the political, social and cultural aspects of history are preserved in lithic inscriptions often found mutilated. There was hardly any village without a temple. It was the nucleus around which villages were constructed.

Vijayanagara kings were great builders. During this period many fortresses, palaces and temples were constructed. Temples built during this period are well known for their size, details of decoration, sculpture and painting. The Vijayanagara temples built in their entirety are found in the Rayalaseema region in the places of Tadipatri, Lepakshi, Penukonda, Kadiri, Gorantla in Ananthpur District, Pushpagiri, Rayachoti in Kadapa District, Somapalem, Narayanavanam, Chandragin, Mangapuram, Tirupati in Chittur District, Markapuram in Prakasham District and Srisailam in Kurnool District stands testimony to the temples of the period. The Emperors of Vijayanagara made structural additions like **mandapas, prakaras and gopuras** to the temples of earlier periods in many places like Tirumala, Tirupati, Kalahasti, Tiruchanur in Chittoor District, Ahobilam and Srisailam in Kurnool District installation of temple building in those days was treated as one of the seven pious deeds popularly known as sapta santanas namely one's own son adopted son literary work, an agrahara, a garden a tank and a temple.¹

From the Vijayanagara times the temple grew up into an amazingly important institution that dominated social life in the land. The practice of construction of elaborate temples in Andhra country owes origin practically to the Chalukyas. A number of inscriptions in Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada and Tamil belonging to this period record the construction of temples, installations of the deities, donations of different gifts such as land, coins, food items, tanks, and lamps for maintenance of temple constructed.

*Corresponding Author: Dr. Mallela Nagendra

The monuments of Rayas of Vijayanagara, still survive in Kadiri, Penugonda, Markapuram, Srisailam, Kadapa, Tirupati, Ahobilam of Rayalaseema region. All these temples were endowed with lands and villages and they maintained their own system of administration run by the respective governing bodies. K.A.N. Sastry rightly assessed the role of the temple of the medieval period in the following words. "Hindu temple attained the zenith of its influence on the social life of the country. It ceased to be a small structure of brick and mortar providing a center of simple worship attended by the villagers. The new idea of the stone temple found room for the employment of "much skill and taste in its planning decoration. With its rise there came up also a varied complex routine in each temple sustained by the rich accumulations in land and gold, the result of pious gifts offered with generosity, and administered with care to which have long become strangers. Each generation husbanded with caution. What was handed down to it, and by means of fresh additions managed to leave a richer heritage to its successor. The vast and growing wealth of the temples brought them into more and more intimate business relations with the neighbourhood".² He further remarks that "As land holder, employer and consumer of goods and services as bank, school and museum, as hospital and theatre, in short as nucleus which gathered round itself all the best in the arts of civilized existence and regulated them with humanness born of the spirit of Dharma, the medieval Indian temple has a few parallels in the annals of mankind."³

Each temple has considerable size of resources with governing body known as **sthana**. The head of the body is called **sthanapati** or **stanadhipati**.⁴ He needed not to be necessarily the chief pontiff of the temple, who exercises command over all the temple. Under him was a large number of employees who included Brahmanas to recite **Vedas** and other scriptures at the **abhisheka** or worship or on any festive occasions, servants, attending to the menial duties such as sweeping the floor and dancing. In an inscription from Muddanur⁵ of Kadapa District refers to 'devaradiyalu' which means the devadasi. The inscription registers a gift of land to the temples Ishtakameswara and Bhairaveswara and to a certain Madalachi daughter of Mahasani, the 'devaradiyalu' of the temple. The **sthanapati** is a **vritti** holder appointed to look after the temple administration. In the Srimushanam temple inscription is stated that a grant of land in the village Yalamangal was granted to look after the services to the god on specified occasions.⁶ The term **Deva-sthana** is vogue even today to denote the administrative office of the temple. It was a full - fledged institution with its elaborate service and office administrative machinery. This gives us an idea about the size of the temple retinue. It has affiliation to one or the other religious Matha, the pontiff of which exercised autonomous power over these temples. In fact temples were the branch institutions for their religious preaching's. It is needless to say that the worship and ritual in a temple were conducted according to agamas of

the particular **matha**. The wealth of temple used to increase with the influence commanded by the pontiff.⁷

Temple as Land Lord

The kings and their subordinate chiefs used to donate village or lands to temples. The Tirumala temple of Tiruvengadanatha according to an inscription of Saluva Narasimha⁸ owned as many as hundred villages in Chandragiri Rajya under the control of Vijayanagara. Similarly the temples at Kadiri, Marakapuram, Gorantla, Rayachoti, and Srisailam owned several villages as **devadayas**. Thus these temples were much like **Mandalika** estates possessing several villages and lands in different regions where they were situated. For example, the Rangaswami temple at Kovilakunta in Kurnool District possessed land in Chintakunta, Vittalapuram and other Villages.⁹ Similarly the Chennakesava temple at Markapuram in Prakasham District was given gift of land by Lakshmanayya of Harita Gotra in the Marella Village in Addanki Sima.¹⁰ Therefore temples have no political barriers for possessing properties. In this aspect temples were more privileged than the subordinate chiefs. Not only this, the king used to collect only nominal dues from the temples towards taxes.¹¹ Therefore all **Deva vritti** lands and villages were practically granted with all immunities, otherwise called **sarvamanya**.¹² This was the nature of landlordship of temple in those days.

Temple as an Employer

The employees of a temple were generally of five kinds, namely **Ayyalu**, **Stanamatulu**, **Tiruvidhi sani** (dancers) **Nambis** (Priests) **Adhikaris**. An inscription from Chilamakuru in Cuddapah District mentions **Stanapati, sani and Ayyalu**.¹³ An inscription from Tirumala temple¹⁴ mentions the following temple officials. **Sthanattar**, **Nambinar**, **Anusandhanam**, **Tevai**, **Kanganippan**, **Tirupanipilli**. **Adhikari**, **Kaikkolars**, **Sippiyar**, **Mantapakkottar**, and **Tiruvidhi sani**. Among **sthanapatis** generally, include the priests of the temple also. But there are instances where **sthanapatis** are separately mentioned besides **pujaris** separately.¹⁵ It is therefore, evident that the status of **pujaris** in the temple administration was not equal to **sthanapati** who was a member of the governing body. The **sthanapatis** were also generally provided with lands as **vritis** towards remuneration like other employees of the temple.¹⁶

The other class of employees in temple are known as **Ayyalu**. In some cases it is noticed that the officers like **Kottaruvu** or store keeper, **bhandari** or treasurer, **sthanapatulu**, and **Srivaishnavulu**, and **Srikaranamu** or accountant are generally referred to.¹⁷

The third variety of employees in the temple are the **sanis**. This term is derivative of the Sanskrit word **Svamini**. Even respectable women like the wives of the chiefs, Brahmanas, and Reddis used to have this word **sani** as suffix to their personal names. "The **sanis** of the

temples in those days were a particular class of women who were donated to temples by the devotees for the purpose of conducting dance during the time of daily **rangabhoga** in the temple not available. They do not seem to have been paid fixed salaries in kind or cash but their income depends on the grants of the donors. An epigraph from Kommuru states that one Surya donated six **madas** to kommuri sani to maintain a certain seva in the temple. The Tirumala epigraph too mentions Triuvidhisani. The Sanis were not ordinary prostitutes as generally mistaken. They were attached to temple for a set purpose, i.e. to perform dance and music before the god on behalf of the donor and fanned themselves into a corporate body. The temple authorities allotted time for the performance of **nriya and gita** which are included in the sixteen kinds of worship, i.e., **shodashopachara**. The sanis were expected to continue the nriya and **gana** without any lapse.

The other class of employees in the temple was of the servants called **Devakarmulu** or **Kaikkolars**. The menial servants, Cooks, watermen, sweepers, watchmen, conch blowers, the masons and other artisans, were all included in this category of servants. From the beginning of the 11th century various members of the temple establishment were granted lands permanently to enjoy the produce thereof for the services rendered by them in the temple. An inscription from Tirumala temple mentions that a sum of 2,860 panam was paid by Tallapakam Tirumalai Ayyangar into the temple treasury as an additional fund for conducting vanabhojanam festival.¹⁸ The donor allotted out his donation, 4 panams to temple cook, 1 panam for distributor of prasadam, panams to fuel suppliers, 1 panam to potter, 2 panams for Megarai svarupam etc. The epigraphs mention some other names of the servants in temples they are nattava, nayakam, vadvam, maddiliva, sankatnuvaru, chantavandu, kasiyaburnadu, pinnbura, sasanalekha akkasala niveddana vamde brahamandu; tiruvabharana brahamandu, and dvya ettu brahamadu.

Thus the temple in Rayalaseema during this period was a big concern second to only the royal palace which could employ a large number of servants on vrittis or in the form of coin.

Temple as an Institution

There are numbers of inscriptions were gifts were recorded for the maintenance of tethers and their pupils. An inscription dated 1433¹⁹ from Tirumala temple, mentions that the sthanattar registred a deed executed by Mudaliyar Tirukkalikanri dasan, one of the Srivaishnavas of Tirupati, in favour of twenty- four Mahajans residing I Srinivasapuram agrahara, It records that since vedaparayanam ceased to be conducted, Tirukallikanridasan alagapiranar represented to Devana udaiyar the vedaparayanam be resuscitated as the Charity of Devaraja Maharaya. Another epigraph from the same temple refers that sthanattar gave a house to Srimat Vyasatirtha Sripada Udaiyar to his own matham i,c

school to teach vedic science, One inscription from coastal Andhra region gives us an account of the donations made to the temple to support the students. This epigraph refers that the taxes peru sunkamu, vaddara valume due from the village kodumagudla to the temple for the maintenance of worship in the temple and for the support of the students attached to temple. Almost all the big temples used to maintain Vidynmantanas where efficient teachers were employed and free boarding was provided for students.²⁰

Temple as Community Hall and Theatre

All meetings of the village committees were generally held in the vicinity of temples and at times their minutes were also recorded on its walls for safe preservation. Marriages were celebrated in the temples. Even the kings and their officers were used to meet citizens in the temples. It is very interesting to note that some subordinate chiefs recorded their oath of allegiance to the ruler on the walls of Tirumala Temple²¹ Whatever deed they considered noble and scared they used to execute it in the presence of the presiding deity and recorded it on the stories of the temple.

Temple as Bank: Temples in those days used to give loans on interest. An inscription at Chinna Ahobalam, dated 1547 A.D.) records an endowment of 120 varahas into temple treasury by uggarassayya with stipulation that the interest accruing from the amount was to be spent for offerings to god Viranarasimha of Ahobalam.²² Another inscription from Tirumala mentions that Saranusettiyar one of the merchants of lurupati paid 3700 narpanam as capital for the purpose of providing certain offering.²³ "These examples indicate that monetary donations were generally lent and the interest alone totalised for the intended purpose.

Hence it can be said that the temple during the Vijayanagara period was not only a place of worship but also the venue where the socio-cultural life was reflected. The temple has its own administrative setup supervised by a board of trustees, namely sthanapati pujari, and bhandagirika or a man trustee like pontiff of the Matha to which the temple was affiliated. The temple had the privilege of using the standard of measures, It is interesting to note that the temple is stag. within a state., with its own administrations, finances, employees and traditions, Net to the state itself it was the biggest employer, the greatest patron of art, culture and learning, it was centre of higher education, which attracted the best talent. It was the centre of entertainment for the common man, and diverted him with the best music, dance, drama, painting and sculpture. It is observed that " in India temples are the treasure houses of the arts. They are the abodes of living gods. A temple is not fortress of the priest or the monastery of an ascetic." It is the physical core as well as the soul of the community²⁴." Ananda Kumaraswamy has rightly observed the Indian temple is " the statement of radical experience and serves the purpose of the like daily bread."²⁵

REFERENCES

1. An inscription declares Tanuperichina Snthanarn tema Santanam bugrityu denanal HILLIN Vanamu Jerevumu gudiyn Janavinutamulaina SPTA Santanamubul Corpus of Telangana insertion I, No 52.
2. Sastri, K.A. N. (1963). The Chokes Madras.
3. Ibid.
4. South Indian Inscriptions (hereafter S 1.1) Vol XVI No 6.
5. Annual reports 1939 - 40 Mo. 199
6. S.1.1., Vol XVI., No, 307
7. S.1.1., Vol V., No, 66
8. Tirurnala Tirupati Devasthanants (hereafter TTD)) Vol 1, II, No. 128.
9. S.I.I. Vol. XVI. No 297.
10. Ibid No. 266.
11. Sastry, P.V.P. (1978). *The KaKatiyas of Warangal* (p.284). The Govt. of Andhra Pradesh.
12. Journal of Andhra Historical Research Society, Rajahmundry vol. III, P.37.
13. S.I.I. Vol. XVI No 6.
14. TTD , I, Vol III, P.105.
15. Ibid, S.I I , Vol XVI No. 6
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid, Vol VI, No, 139,
18. TTD I Vol V, No 47.
19. T.T.D. I, Vol III, Nos 199, K202.
20. Ibid, Vol III, No 157.
21. TTD I, Vol II, No 4.
22. S I. I. Vol XVI, No 158.
23. TTD 1.Vol IV, No 171.
24. Rao, C. V R. (1964). *An and Artists Ancient India*. The Modern Review.
25. Ananda Coomaraswamy Introduction to Indian An Madras, 1928, P VI,