

# The Role of Hindu Temples In Tamil Merchant Guilds- An Descriptive Study

**K.P.Yuvaraj**

Assistant professor,

T.John College

**Abstract-** In medieval Tamil country the company mercantilism communities were referred to as Guilds. The term 'guild' itself conjures up the image of an association of pros with a well-defined structure. The term 'guild' has been accustomed denote the association of merchants. This guild conception is predicated upon the well-recognized association of the correct division with agriculture and connected activities, as well as trade and a few processing of agricultural commodities, as well as artisan-trader activities. Many inscriptions provide us with the guilds ' religious activities and charitable works. They were the patron of the temples. This article is reveals about various different merchant guilds in ancient Tamil Nadu and their contributions to temples which enhanced the social economic development of the people.

**Keywords-** Different merchant guilds,religious activities, charitable works

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the critical resources for the study of the early Tamil country is the corpus of Tamil literature called Sangam literature. It was composed at distinct intervals over an prolonged span of approximately six hundred years.(1) Internal alternate become mostly on barter phrases. People exchanged goods for corn. For instance, salt changed into exchanged for paddy.(2)

The trade guilds of south India covers amount of a roughly between seven centuries from A.D.600 to A.D.1300,the period between the institution Pallava kingdom and decline of Chola kingdom. Besides the Pallavas and Cholas, alternative kingdoms conjointly existed throughout this era including the Cheras, the Pandiyas and variety of alternative minor principalities. One necessary feature of south India throughout this era was the event of corporate activities among traders.A large variety of inscriptions of Pallavas, Cholas , Pandiyas, Cheras and alternative kingdoms area unit mentioned the activities of many trade guilds like Anjuvannam, Manigramam, Nanedesi, Aionnurrurar, Ayyarole, valanjirar etc..,(3)

## Circumstances leading to Guild formation

In medieval times, with the right of inheritance, the rulers gave land to the aristocracy or to the Brahmins. They acted as the land owner and employed people from the lower castes to work in the farms.They were interested in the popular cultivation of land and worked in accordance with the government. Naturally, the landowners had to meet on certain occasions to carry out these tasks. It is going to be an informal meeting. They spoke about their common problems. Over time, they met frequently with the increasing complexity of village social and economic organization. It was later formal meeting. It has become a model for corporate bodies to be created.

When the traders moved to trade along unstable roads, infested with organized robber groups, they forced the traders to take steps among them to form an organization. The formation of merchant guilds in medieval Tamil Country resulted in these contingencies. Therefore, the main goal of the guilds was to achieve and preserve equal opportunity by limiting or excluding competition and guaranteeing them a good subsistence basis. The merchant had been identified with the guild.(4)

## II. IMPORTANT GUILDS OF MERCHANTS AND THEIR ACTIVITIES IN ANCIENT TAMIL NADU

The merchant guilds played a prominent role in the country's social, religious, bureaucratic and judicial affairs.8 They served as guardians and governed by both the rulers. They have received money endowments from the rulers. For the welfare of the people, they built and maintained charity houses, temples and tanks.(5)

### Manigramam

One of the Manigramam guild traders ' earliest inscription records appeared in the ninth or early tenth century on the Kerala coast at the port of Quilon(6).Like many others, the contents of this inscription indicated that the association Manigramam was undoubtedly a merchant guild. The evidence that this merchant's corporation was operating in this

port must then be seen in its broader context as part of the broader pattern of overland and maritime commercial activity that included areas bordering the Arab peninsula.(7)

### **Ainnurruvar**

Many merchant guilds' subsequent inscription notices were located on coastal sites, the earliest inscription referring to the merchant guild of Ayyavole's five hundred swamis. This guild is found in Aihole's Central Deccan Plateau, now the Bijapur district's Hungund taluk. Aihole is located in the doab created by the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra on the banks of the river Malprabha.(8) Aihole inscriptions belonging to the merchant guild Ayyavole range from the eighth to the early twelfth century chronologically.(9)

### **Nanadesi**

Nanadesi is another major merchant organization. The term Nanadesi is self-explanatory (multi-national).(10) It originated in the Chalukya Kingdom from Ayyavolepura or it was used as a synonym for Ainnurruvar and seems to be similar to Padinen-vishayan. In fact, the term padinenbhumi and Nanadesi appear in the Samutrapatti inscription as qualifying Ainnurruvar.(11)

### **Anjuvannam**

The anjuvannam guild had as its members foreigners. The representatives belonged to different countries, including Persians, Jews and Muslims. There was one Issuppu Irappan i.e. Joseph Raban, obviously a Jewish merchant was awarded the title of anjuvannam, the use of ships and cars, decorative clothes, daytime use of torch, palanquin etc.(12) As foreign merchants, in the eighth and ninth centuries, they began their commercial activities on the west coast and spread to the Tamil country's coastal regions. The earliest record refers as Jewish traders to the anjuvannattar. These traders started settling on the west coast.(13)

Early Muslim Arab merchant from the west coast used the word anjuvannam for the first time. They started to settle on the east coast when they started their trading activities in Tamil State. They are known as sonakar as well. The word Sonakar was used in Tamil for Muslim. These anjuvannattar were confined to the ports and may have been involved in overseas trade. We have the right to impose tariffs on imports.(14)

### **Padinenvishayattar**

Padinenvishayattar was also a guild with overseas trade involvement..Padinen denotes the number eighteen. Vishayam refers to sense of matter, state, and country.(15) The padiden word is a traditional term. From the beginning, as padinen chittar, padinen kudimakkal, padinen kurrum and padinen kilkanakku, the Tamils used this number eighteen.(16) The Tamil lexicon identifies the eighteen districts, including Sriklanka, Sonakam, Javakam China and Tamilnadu, which would have included the padinenvishayam. The padinenvishayattar inscriptions can also be found in Srilanka, Malaysia, Java and Sumatra(17).

An inscription discovered in Kilakarai refers to the padinenvishayattar guild.(18) This guild's members involved in this region's pearl trade. The inscription discovered in the country of Chola also refers to the guild of padinen.(19)

### **Nagarattar**

Nagarattar was another form of Tamil country merchant guild. Scholars believed that these nagarattars were involved in local commerce. Nevertheless, this guild was primarily involved in local trade and also had commercial ties with other countries. Four different types of traders, i.e. Viyaparigal, Saliyar, Sankarapadiyar and Vaniyar, according to Devaram hymns. All these four have been included in the nagarattar.(20)

For Tamil merchants, the nagarattar was a generic term. By this word, the Chetti group of today is known. The nagarattar was the full-blown trading community. Most of them were from Nattukottai (modern Pudukottai and Ram). The nagarattar's residential quarters were referred to as nagaram.(21)

### **Valanjiyar**

Another merchant's guild was valanjiyar. Some historians believed they were from Srilanka, as some of Tamil country's inscriptions refer to valanjiyar as Srilanka's valanjiyar.(22) However, the Tamil valanjiyar could have spread to Srilanka because of its commercial expansion. According to Srilankan inscription, they belonged to the velaikkara family.

Elaikkara was a family of the valangai. Valangai velaikkara has been mentioned in Polannaruva's inscriptions. They would have been the valangai group's leaders and likely engaged in trading activities. (23)

### **Danmadavalar**

There was a reference about a danmadavalar guild. This guild operated at Manalmelkudi.(24)They called themselves padinenbhumi vaniga nagarattar in their prasasti danmadhuvalar. It means that the eighteen districts were operated on both Kaveri banks.They had a banner and garland of their own. They also had the power as a group to besiege the brass vessels and destroy the mud vessels of the tax defaulters they levied on the members.(25) Another view was that they were the members of the nanadesi guild. Because in eighteen pattanams, nanadesi had their trade movements.(26)

### **Chitrameliperiyanaadu**

This was a farmer's guild. A number of epigraphs clearly discerned the agrarian base of early Tamil Trade, which documented Chitrameli periyanaadu's activities. Many merchant organizations have been incorporated with this Chitrameli assembly since the community was primarily agrarian. Mugundanur inscription mentions the term Chitrameliya yanaiyaga.(27)

Chitrameli means the beautiful plough, which was the guild's emblem. This guild has been identified with the provincial organization of agriculture. It was a farmer's organization. It included all members of the caste from different castes. Their typical eulogy in the inscriptions is mainly agrarian contemplation.(28)

### **Organization of a guilds**

The guild was headed by a member who was unanimously chosen as the leader of the group. He was called Settee pattana, swamy pattana. Throughout socio-political life, numerous inscriptions describe its functions.He had several names

1. Pattana swamy ,
2. Vyaapari ,
3. Pruthvi pathi,
4. Pruthvi Settee,
5. Pattana Swamy,
6. Pura Pathi,
7. Nagareshwara etc

While the absence of a stable strong government does not affect business growth, sustainable community management has helped business growth.Merchants who traded in local stores or markets were known ceṭṭi(Cast name change after17th centuries and they also called "mayillati".Kampojam (Cambodia), Samba (Vietnam), Chavagam (Java), Swarnadeepam (Sumatra), Srivijaya (Sumatra's Palembang), Sailendra Government's Deed or Kedah (Malaysia), Sri Lanka or Eelam (Sri Lanka), China,

Burma (Myanmar) business contacts available can be traced through an inscriptions.News about Indian participation in public foreign merchants, business contributions to the team and their defense with their military contained.

Overseas inscriptions have found evidence of the activities of Tamil Nadu merchants who, like the monarchs of Tamil Nadu, have given the donation to foreign religious institutions. It is also a means of business development that the purpose of giving the donations to the temples rather than investing in the profits of the merchants is to promote the value of the community and the benefit of the people.(30)

Reviewing the temples illustrates the relationship between merchant guilds and the development of trade in this period. With its wealth, the merchant community acquired from trade and commerce became proverbial to temples for such benefits. Many South Indian inscriptions give information about the gifts and donations made to the temples for worship and conduct.

During the reign of Maravarman Kulasekara Pandya I, refers to several groups including Chittirameliperiyanaattu, Tisaiaiyirattuainnuruvar and local Nagarattar representatives from different places had met in the achchalakandanka and agreed to grant the pattinappagudi – a toll on several merchandise items offered to the temple to be used for rituals in the temple.(31)Another fragment in the same place contains another same merchant's prasasti and probably records a grant for a festival in the month of the margali (January) and other services.(32)

An inscription stated that the ulvari was issued by the King for the tax-free village of Kumaran — Ambinallur, which was granted to the temple through Navayan Kondambi of Kulamukku, a horse chetti (kudirai chetti) of Malaimandalam for worship and offerings.233 Nanadesi Tisaiairattu Ainnuruvar became liable for the charity of excavating a tank and for the maintenance during the year for worship and offerings.(33)

Nanadesi Tisaiairattu Ainnuruvar was responsible for the charity of excavating a tank and maintaining it throughout the year for which the guild set up an endowment.(34)This activity of the same guild in Ambasamudram district of Tirunelveli was certified by a record dated 1033 A.D. The guild donated lands to Ambasamudram's Siva temple.(35)

There are countless benefits given to religion and society by the merchant community, some of which are cited below. In addition to their earlier endowments to the temple of

Tirumalirunjolai (Alagarkovil) and Srivilliputtur at the time of Jatavarman Kulasekhara I, the Nagarattar of Kulasekharapuram endowed land to offer worship in temple at Settur, Ramnad district(36)

The Nagarattar of Pullam or Rajarajapuram in Tenkasnadu, through a member of their guild (Nagarattar), made a tax-free endowed land for feeding mahesvaras and desantiris in the Kuparayan Madame (mutt) attached to the temple in Singikulam, Tirunelveli district.(37) The Nagarattar and the nadu, at the time of Jatavarman Sundara Pandya I.(38).The Nagarattar had constructed a corridor in Uggrankottai's Siva temple, and it was named Nagarattar Tiruchuralai.(Chitrameli Periyannattar had its own group that had made a significant contribution to religion with Nagaram and Nadu.(39).

In the twenty-seventh year of Maravarman Kulasekhara Pandya I, the perianattar community decided to contribute a specified levy on its land to complete the unfinished Perianattan Maligai and Periya-Nattan Tirugopuram(40).The Chettiars of Nattukottai founded an important Nagarattars branch. It has been said that Pillaiyarpatti is one of their initial nine settlements. Some numbers associated with their guilds specified them.

The merchants had different roads. Nyayappari town temple at Tiruvengavayil in Peruvayil Nadu called Narpatten-Navira-Vinayagar Emeruman.While making gifts to the temple, they were called as a body called ' Nattuchettikalam. '(41)Tenilangaivalanjiyar guild number was responsible for building the Amman shrine in the temple of Sundaesvara in Aruppukkottai in the district of Ramanathapuram.(42).

In return for certain services to temples, the Valanjiyar at Tirunelveli had the karamai right of land to the local temple. (43)Another inscription found on some stones lying in front of the temple in Hanumantagudi, Tiruvadana Taluk, Ramnad district, and Malavantha (Jain) temple. This record shows that Padinenbhumi gave the temple in Mutturukurram a gift of land and money for the performance of caval duty(44).A lithic record dated from the 15th year of Maravarman Sundarapandya in Periyakulam, Madurai district at Rajendracholessvara temple on the southern wall of the Subramanya shrine. It is an inscription fragment that lists Padinenvishaya–Isvara and Desiyariya Erivirapattinam where this temple is located.(45)

From the first and second inscriptions,(46) it is clear that during the later Pandyas period Padinenvishayattar and Erivirapattinam were respectively in vogue as merchant group and merchant warehouse.(47)An inscription of Sinnamanur,

Periyakulam Taluk, Madurai district dating from Maravarman Kulasedhara's 41st year (A.D.1308–1309) was found on a wall in the temple of Rajasimanesvara. This refers to a donation of some tax on items sold at Arikesarinallur and Sivallavanpadividu in the markets (bazaars). It is for defraying the expenses of the merchant bodies Padinenvishayattar and the chettis of Chonadu and others to worship and conduct festivals in margali (January) month.(48)

The inscription dated 26th year of Jatavarman Virapandya (A.D.1278 – 1279) was found in the Rajasimheswara temple on the wall in Sinnamanur, Periyakulam, Madurai district.(49)This inscription documents a similar gift of imposing such merchandise items such as betel nut, pepper, and rice that the community members, Padinenvishayattar of the same at Arikesarinallur in Tamilnadu, agreed to contribute. Such articles require investment to build temples.(50)Another epigraphic record from Maravarman Kulasekhara I's 41st regnal year (A.D.1309).(51)

This mentions the fact that the Nalungaram Padinenvishayattar, the Padinetturajya padinenvishayattar, the ' brokers, the Nattuchettis and the Talachchettis also assembled together in the same temple, probably in connection with a gift to the temple, to conduct some trade.(52)Another South Indian inscription indicates that in his 6th regnal year, Jatavarman Sundara Pandya gave a gift of the tax revenue levied on certain exported merchandise products such as wool, fabric, arecanut, pepper, turmeric and ginger by the Nalungaram Pandinenvishayattar and the targar (brokers). (53)Instead they gathered in the Tiruppulanduraiudaiyanayanar temple tiruvolkkamandapam to meet the requirements of the deity's sattuppadi and tirupparivattam (clothing)(54)

An inscription of the same place dating from the 7th regnal year of Jatavarman Sundarapandya (A.D.1276), documenting a donation by the same merchant bodies listed above for the creation of a flower garden for the temple called Rajakkanayanatirunandavanam.(55)An inscription from the thirteenth century documents Padinenvishayattar and Nagarattar's annual celebration of the local Siva temple.(56)Another inscription found in Samalpuram refers to the Vaikasi festival performed by the guild merchants.(57)

### III. CONCLUSION

Role merchant guilds in The temples of Tamil Nadu played a major role in the economic, social and political spheres and as cultural centers. The temples functioned as a charitable organization combining religious leadership, social control and economic empowerment. Temple donations,

movable property, immovable property, the sheep, oxen, ornamental, grains, gold, cash and treasury collected in the area of economic development (in this bank as you do), rotation of money to the needy interest on the loan payments and the income from the temple repairs and administrative expenses and festivals were held. Merchants are involved in the distribution of donations and participating in temple administration, maintaining their value in the community and gaining the people's recognition for their business. In Tamil Country the guilds enjoyed their powers and exercised their economic supremacy in many of Tamil's trade and business centers. They were also busy in littoral areas such as Mamallapuram, Mayilappur, Nagapattinam, Tondi, Ramnad and geographical areas. They widened their marketing activities to demonstrate less dependence on royal support and patronage. At Tuvarankurichi and Kovilpatti, Korramangalam, Ainnurvuvar exercised its power to levy and to grant cessation to the local Merchandising temples passing through the area.

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