

The Role of Depressed Communities in the Services of Ranganatha Temple of Srirangapatna

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Abstract

An attempt is made in this paper on “The Role of Depressed Communities in the Services of Ranganatha Temple of Srirangapatna”. Temples were not only the centers of devotion, they had their own impact on social, economic, and cultural activities of those days. Temples are the manifestation of deep rooted devotion and sincerity of the people. The main aim behind their construction was that they should be the very part of the people’s life and should be the source of strength of correct them. This “Temple as it was the centre of devotion to God, it was also the centre of learning. Fine arts like sculpture, painting, music, dance, etc. developed under the shelter of temple and above all, it was the people’s court too. On the other side the feudal lords who were patronizing feudalism. Monarchs, supporting one another, began the construction of society that was beset with social and economic hatred. If temples supported, social inequality in the name of religion, monarchs. Patronized temples, for the existence of their power.

KEYWORDS: Srirangapatna, Ranganatha Temple, Agraharas, Feudalism, Religion.

Introduction:

An attempt is made in this paper on The role of Depressed Communities in the Service of Ranganatha Temple of Srirangapatna. Temples were not only the centers of devotion, they had their own impact on social, economic, and cultural activities of those days. Temples are the manifestation of deep rooted devotion and sincerity of the people. The main aim behind their construction was that they should be the very part of the people’s life and should be the source of strength of correct them. therefore temple itself was the central point of every town in India. Dr.M.Chidananda Murthy, in his work, “The cultural study of Kannada Epigraphs” has said about the way how the social and cultural life of the town, would take form around it. This “Temple as it was the centre of devotion to God, it was also the centre of learning. Fine arts like sculpture, painting, music, dance, etc. developed under the shelter of temple and above all, it was the people’s court too. When grieved, people would go to temple and narrate their difficulties they would decorate temples and perform pooja celebrations during festivities. Temple was choultry for the poor and was the reason for the wealth of the rich to flow out. Thus, the construction work of the temple that was the shelter of many fold activities, is carried on a large scale in Karnataka. With this background, the origin, development the region where activities of the construction of the temples, increased. The reason for this, their impact on economic, social and cultural life of the people. On one side, the temple that supported the social inequality, the priesthood that was prevalent in Agraharas. On the other side the feudal lords who were patronizing feudalism. Monarchs, supporting one another, began the construction of society that was beset with social and economic hatred. If temples supported, social inequality in the name of religion, monarchs. Patronized temples, for the existence of their power.

In those days, the disciples who were known as matured in the upper strata of society, wished to maintain a certain distance from the common folk. The necessity to cross this barrier did not bother even the common folk. But though this difference, perished in social institutions like temples, it could be found that somewhere on one side the common folk was utilized in temple activities, for one matter or the other. Considering this, it becomes necessary to verify the way in which the temple exercised its authority and how it grew socially, economically and culturally on common folk with the background of each factor.

Temples that were collective pooja centres, went on to form inseparable part of the society. Pooja and others, for the deity inside the temple constructed its performers, the people who help them the maintenance of all these people. Thus the responsibility of temples went on increasing. The maintenance of temples became complicated. After the temples began to perform as the centres of learning, as well as the missions, its responsibility increased even more. Temple that originated only as the place of collective worship gradually became the focus of society. It became the origin for the growth of the cultural factors like education art, religion etc.

As the number of devotees increased then began not only the general worship, but also the special pujas for the deity. From this, it is but natural that the changes have occurred even in the methods of service. From the changes that occurred in the status and importance of the temples, it became necessary to consider seriously, its responsibilities, about its deeds and services method of their management, pooja services, maintenance of those who perform pujas, and those who assist them and music service, dance service that became a part of pooja rituals and management and maintenance of those works. The renovation and reconstruction those were necessary to prevent the decay of the temples etc.

Temples were not being merely the religious centres they were the centres to control the day-to-day activities and social order. Temples were the higher courts of village administration and caste compulsions. Participation in the work of temple dependent upon the caste. Different classes of people were to enjoy rights, in the temples on the basis of caste alone. The main organs of the temple. Such as, sanctum, interior, navarang, mukhamandap and prakaras reflect the ranges of social order of those days. this can be classified as follows:

- 1) Only Brahmins were allowed to enter into sanctum and worship the deity.
- 2) Just lower strata of them could stand before sanctum but not to so inside.
- 3) People of third strata, could assemble in the hall of the temple, but were not to enter main 'Mandir' of the temple.
- 4) People of still lower class, had to stand outside the compound wall of the temple.
- 5) Untouchables had to stand away distantly to the temple.
- 6) Untouchables had to stand away distantly to the temple. They had no freedom even to go to the street of the temple.

It becomes clear from the above classification that caste system and the temples moved hand in hand temples, inspiring fear and devotion among the people and through that would make people accept authority. The same condition could be found even in the Ranganatha temple of Srirangapatana but a slight change can be seen at present.

Along with supervising the main administration of the temple mainly to perform different works of the temple the labour class to inevitable. Among them priest who performs pooja to the deity, the gardener who looks after the flower garden reserved for temple besides the temple. Singers who sing during or after pooja, flutists who play flute, conch blowers, watchman of the temple 'Palaviga' who carries the flag for deity's chariot, now and then even it was the practice to appoint a sculptor to take care of the temple if it decays. He is called 'Rovari' or 'kalkutiga' in epigraphs characters or 'Devadasis' cooks. One who cleans grains people who kindle lights and so on. The basic works mention about this arrangement even in Ranganatha temple of Srirangapatna as it was prevalent in different temples of Karnataka.

Servants of Ranganatha temple and the services they could do are classified into five categories.

- 1) Supervisors and office.
- 2) One who performs pooja and services etc. to the diety in the temple as per the Agamas.
- 3) Sealing in the temple keeping a watch in the temple. Kindling the lights building chariots and doing the other jobs like vehicle package etc.
- 4) Making instruments during service times.
- 5) Servants other sundry servants.

Servants of above two classes were reserved only for Brahmins. The services of other three classes, were confined to the people of lower classes only.

Srirangapattana had many communities, such as agriculturists, Nayakas (fishermen), untouchables, washer men, Ganigas, Goldsmiths, Scavangers, and it can be seen that all these communities were engaged with one or the other professions in the services of the temple. Those were, Guarding and silver touch kindly the 'Golla' and light, watch and light (touch) 'Bandicara and Mashat, Watchman and Servant. Havaldar, soldiers they belong to class III, and do their respective jobs.

Guarding the diety and silver torch

Both of them, every day even during festivities, holding silver touch. During nights, sleeping in the temple alone doing the work of Supervision. The distinct silver umbrellas that are in the watch room like 'chamara', 'Gumbharathy' etc. to give them whenever demanded by servants of locals and after completion of work, to keep them offer scrutiny. Seal and keys carrying them in taluk office, during nights in turn and bring them in the morning.

Golla and Mashaal

He has to take the provisions that come to the godown had to give things from godown. During night times to sleep near godown and to supervise. These hold hand torches in term.

Watch and Mashaal

To take out seal of the chain door everyday in the presence of deity and to close it during nights. To sleep near goddess diety during nights and to supervise. Alongwith 'Agrodaka' to come holding 'suryapana' to do such sundry jobs.

Bandicara and Mashaal

To sleep in the temple during night times and supervise work to taking care of properly the things such as umbrella, screen pendal, things of chariot, things of

vehicle, things of palquin, etc. in the temple.

Watch and Servant

To be present in the office of the temple and do the job. Whatever is told in extra days and time as 'Tirunakshatra' etc. in scheduled (definite) places to the 'Rasaburude-Guloru' etc. and untie them. to take care of flower garden that is in front of Krishnaswamy. To sleep in the temple during nights and to supervise.

Hawaldar

He has to be present during nights. As usual at every furn, to seal, and report the same to 'peshkars' and 'Parupattegaravu' administators. Change the watch according to turn. During extra times and 'utsav' times to be present inside the temple and beat inside.

Soldiers

According to turn across to god goddess to supervise at the door of the tower. When procession starts, to be present along with the procession to take care so that no untoward incident takes place.

'Mohari', 'Shruthi', 'Doke', 'chinnangale', 'Davane', 'Kaitala', 'Jaagate' all these people belong to class IV while going to bring 'Agrodaka' in the morning, these people, Chinnangala 'Davam', 'Jagate', have to go with the pot. While 'Agradaka' comes 'Shruthi', 'Mohari', 'Dolu' including 'Kaitala' have to come to the temple with the instrument. Every day in extra times have to remain at temple and play instrument.

Scavangers and Dobis belong to V class. They have to see that the provisions that come to godown are free from stone and soil. Powdering them to sweep inside the temple, even two times and keep it clean. The supply provisions to the kitchen. To wash pillars etc. of the temple and keep them clean. Tower stairs, vehicle mandoop, 'Gajendra Moksha Mandapa' etc. should be swept and kept clean 'Dobi' (washerman). To wash clothes of god during extra period and also during the times or 'Abhisheka' and give them clean.

Conclusion:

Thus, temples had different views and daily pooja performances of temples were conducted from collective services of all communities. Particularly, it is noteworthy that we have referred the role of lower classes. All classes performed the jobs assigned to them with devotion. From this the services of temples went on smoothly without any hinderance, continuously. In ancient times, people of all classes participated actively in different works of temples. But, today as there have occurred enough changes in the present social order, changes can be noted even in the services of the temples. Some of the services of the temple have disappeared. The reason people of certain communities have changed their basic occupations. And moreover the rigid formation that had prevailed before is no more now.

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