

CONCLUSION

Inscriptions are authentic source of information to write history. They are mainly written on temple walls. Though they are donative in character, they are useful to the historian as they refer to the names of the Kings, dynasties, reign years and political achievements. The names of the donors and the nature of the donations are stated in the inscriptions which are written in language patronised by the kings of the time. Most of the inscriptions are written in Tamil, in *vatteluttu* script. These epigraphs are also time examples of evolution of Tamil script in ancient period. In the earlier stages, when temples were smaller in size, inscriptions were written on the adisthanas and four walls only. But, later on when the temples had compound walls, *mandapas*, pillars etc, inscriptions were inscribed on them also. The kings and the other donors registered their donation on these walls so that they would last long. Moreover, the temples, which are living monuments of devotion, became the centres of public and religious activities of people of the locality they gathered in temple to worship, to meditate, to discuss critically political and social problems and exchange amenities. The donors gained good status by registering their names and donations on the temple walls. The inscriptions attract the attention of the people and a proper study of the records proves that the ancient people attached great importance to various activities of the temple which involved spending of large sums of money. As such, the temples were not commercial organisations, and so the subsistence of a temple was related to various contributions made by philanthropists. By receiving donations in the form of animals, land, money and gold, the temples received uninterrupted human resources for its maintenance.

Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks, once the seat of Ay and Travancore Maharajas, later emerged as separate taluks of Kanyakumari District in Tamilnadu, are the housing places of legendary and historical importance. Evergreen hills, perennial rivers, dense forests, and a long coastal line beautify these taluks. Structures of great antiquity and architectural values made them significant taluks in the history of Indian subcontinent.

Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks had been under the rule of the Ays, Cholas, the Chola Pandya Viceroys, Venad rulers and the *Maharajas* of Travancore. Inscriptions at Parthivapuram and Chitharal confirm the Ay Kings like Kokkarunandadakkan and Vikramaditya Varaguna ruled there regions one after another with Vizhinjam as their headquarters. Another historical importance of these taluks is that it came under Chola supremacy during the time of Rajaraja I, the great Chola ruler who led an expedition against the Pandyas and Ays, conquered the southern portion and named it as Rajaraja Tennadu. Inscriptional evidences at Thirunandikkarai and Cheramangalam show that the whole of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks came under Rajaraja Tennadu. At the time of Parantaka Chola, Pandya Kingdom (inclusive of present Agasteeswaram and Thovalai Taluks) came under the Cholas. During the time of Raja Raja I further expansion forwards Venad occurred. At that time the Ay kingdom which lay in between Pandya nadu and Venad came under Cholas. Raja Raja Chola I inscriptions at Periyakulam (Chera Mangalam) and Thirunandikkarai stand evidence to it. Muttom a place in Kalkulam taluk was renamed as Mummudi Cholanallur by Rajaraja I. Thirunandikkarai inscription speaks of change of name of the place Muttom as Mummudi Cholanallur. This Muttom ought to be a place at the foot mountain near Pechiparai. Any place where river hits- be it mountain or sea – will be called as Muttom. The present Muttom near Kadiyapattanam was not famous at that

time. Instead the place is known as Kadiyapattanam (Sea Post). Kadiyapattanam, an ancient sea port, was well known at the time of Rajaraja I.

With the arrival of the Cholas, Travancore including Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks entered into a new phase in its history. The epigraph found in Thiruvithamkodu mentions that Jatavarman Sundara Chola Pandya, was appointed as the Chola Pandya viceroy by his own illustrious father, Rajendra I. Maravarman Udaiyar Sri Vikrama Chola Pandya succeeded Jatavarman Sundara Chola Pandya and this viceroy regnal system did not continue after the accession of Kulothunga I in A.D.1070. During that time, the Venad power established its supremacy over the southern area in a rejuvenated form. The enfeebled condition of the Chola authority in the south afforded a splendid opportunity for the Venad Kings. A branch of Venad dynasty who were ruling from *Kollam*, established to new capital at Thiruvithamkodu in 12th Century. This dynasty known as Thriuppapur Swarupam later moved this capital to Kalulam. There after Then Kalkulam (Padmanabhapuram) was the capital of the Venad rulers, till the royal family elevated themselves as Travancore sovereign and shifted their capital to Trivandrum.

The Venad Kingdom was very often at war with its aggressive neighbours. A severe battle fought in Kalkulam taluk was the Battle of Thiruvattar between Vira Keralavarma and the Mughal Sirdar Mukilan. During the reign of Vira Keralavarma, as the prince of Eraniel, Thiruvithamkodu, Keralapuram, Kalkulam and Udhayagiri fort of Kalkulam taluk gained political significance. In Vilavancode taluk, the places were quite peaceful.

Another significant incident was the entry of European powers in the modern Travancore. In the beginning, the rulers of Travancore managed to keep the Portuguese and the Dutch away from their territory. They had trade connections. But their

political interventions were evaded. But Travancore was forced to make an alliance with the British. At that time the Dutch were very powerful in the west coast. They established factory and a fort at Colachel. They attacked Travancore from the fortification that they had secured near Colachel and captured some territories. But finally the Dutch were totally defeated in 1741 at the Battle of Colachel and many of their soldiers were captured. One of the Prisoners of war (POW) was Delannoy who subsequently served Marthandavarma as the Commander of a regiment in the Travancore army. He served loyally to Travancore and kept his iron foundry at Udhayagiri.

During the reign of Ramavarma Maharaja, a British Resident was stationed at Trivandrum. Velu Thampi of Talakkulam became the *Dalaway* of Travancore. The departure of the *Dewan* marked the end of all Travancore resistances to the British. During Gouri Lakshmi Bai, (A.D.1811 – A.D.1815) the Resident Col.Munro assumed the Dewanship of the state. The reforms of Col.Munro had changed the social and economic and educational life of the people of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. The administrative reforms, social improvements and religious toleration of the succeeding monarchs of Gouri Lakshmi Bai completely changed the out look of the people of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks.

As in other parts of Travancore, it was only sixty five years ago that the people of these taluks witnessed a major historic change. That change took them away from the long epoch of monarchy and entered into the path of democracy. This event was followed by the merging of these taluks with the Madras state in November 1st 1956. After the merger, the administrative set up of the local bodies then in existence at Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Thovalai and Agastheeswaram taluks was allowed to continue until 31st March 1962, These rulers constitute of Kanyakumari District.

Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks had been part of the Kingdom of Travancore for a long time. Hence, it shared the socio-cultural traits of Travancore very much. Caste and communities played a pivotal role in the social status of the people of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. Brahmins were considered to be superior caste and they occupied the highest rank in the caste ladder. Nairs were considered as caste Hindus next to Brahmins. Although Nair were Sudra Caste in Varnasrama, they acquired a powerful status in the social arena. Ambalavasis, Namboothiris were also superior in social order due to their connect in with temples. They were made considerable donations to the temple for various purposes. They also got benefits from the royal families and the rulers of the state. Ezhavas, Nadars, Pulayas, Parayas and Mannans were considered as low caste people and they were kept at a distance. The low caste people were considered untouchables and many social discriminations were imposed upon them.

While pursuing the social history of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks, it is evidently seen that along with untouchability other social evils like *Pulappedi Mannapedi*, slavery and Devadasi systems were in existence. The Christian missionaries worked among the poorest of the poor and did much for their welfare which has been proved by a tomb inscription of Margaret Delannoy, wife of Eustachious Delannoy. Thus, side by side with their evangelical work, the missionaries took efforts to bring about social uplift of the downtrodden. Huzur office Copper Plate mentions the Parthivasekharapuram salai established by Kokkarunandadakkan in the Parthivapuram temple complex acted as a boarding school and lodge for ninety five Brahmin students with prescribed disciplinary rules and regulations. Imposing fines for students were also in practice.

The distribution of land as it existed in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks were mainly the result of social customs, the laws of inheritance, and the legislative enactments made from time to time. Though the people of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks had been agriculturists for several centuries, they are still following the traditional methods of cultivation. Since the size of holdings are too small due to subdivision and fragmentation, modern techniques could not be carried out. Inscriptions reveal that Land revenue was the major income of the state. It deals with the land tenure, type of lands, cultivation of crops, cropping pattern, its yielding process, agriculture and irrigation, digging of canals, rivers and its maintenance. Temples which became rich land owning institutions in course of time could not have cultivated all their lands directly which perhaps led to the practice of leasing them to tenants. Extant land grants do not clearly indicate that early medieval South Indian temple, like the north Indian donors, had the right to enjoy the land and get it enjoyed, to cultivate it and get it cultivated. The lands donated to temples were vested in the hands of tenants to cultivate it and secured the paddy as its interest for multi-purpose uses of the temple. Inscriptions also refer to the wages. The workers and servants were given wages in kind (i.e.paddy). It also gives considerable details about the wet and dry lands and its cropping pattern. People cultivated multifarious crops like banana, betelvine, vegetable crops, coconut, tapioca, rubber etc. Paddy crop was given top most priority. Several kinds of taxes were imposed upon the people, such as *taritalai*, *karanmai*, *kadamai*, *panaim-pattam* etc. Some of the gifted lands were donated by the rulers as tax free lands. Inscriptions also reveal about the several kinds of taxes on festival, people etc. Wrong doers were punished by fines. Progress of trade and commerce, market, business and other occupations contributed much for the economic progress of the people and it led to a respectable living. It also includes the measures, weights used for

weighing grains and liquids. Coinage reflects the use of various coins in different dynasties. Varieties of coins used in the area reveals the change of economic activities that had dominated socio-economic life of people. The systematic study is needed with the help of minismatic researchers. On the whole, the standard of living of the people of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks has progressed.

As far as religion is concerned, nature worship was the most ancient form of worship which prevailed in the two taluks. When Vardhamana Mahavira and Gautama Buddha preached their new-found faiths, Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks as a part of Kerala, became receptive to the faiths of Jainism and Buddhism. The rock-cut cave temples of Thirunandikkarai and Chitharal were originally the Jain centres of worship and Mondaikadu be a place of Buddhist worship. It was Rajaraja I, who converted the Thirunandikkarai Jain temple into a Siva temple in the 10th century A.D. and Chitharal Jain temple was later converted to Bhagavati worship. Similarly, Mondaikadu Bhagavati Amman temple was built by a Buddhist monk and the doctrine of Ahimsa, the Buddhist practices of *Utsavams* and religious processions became part and parcel of the Hindu form of worship in Mondaikadu temple.

After the eighth century A.D., Saivism and Vaishnavism, the two important sects of Hinduism, flourished, in these areas and during that period many temples were built for Siva and Vishnu. The twelve *Sivalayas* (which are famous in connection with the pilgrimage-race on Sivarathri) of Kanyakumari District, Kalkulam has eight shrines and remaining four belongs to Vilavancode taluk. It is said Adi Sankara, the religious reformer, made Thirparappu in Kalkulam taluk as the temporary centre for his religious propagation. But no supporting evidence is available. Adikesava Perumal temple at Thiruvattar is a fine example of the existence of Vaishnavism in Kalkulam taluk. It is one of the 108 shrines (Divya desams) sacred to the Vaishnavites in India.

Krishnankoil (a suburb of Keralapuram) Krishnaswamy temple, Manalikkarai Alvar Sri Krishnaswamy temple, Alvarkoil Srikrishnaswamy temple, Thalakulam Azhagam Perumal Nayanar temple, Parthivapuram Sri Parthasarathy temple and Thippiramalai Sri Krishnaswamy temple are the fine examples of Vaishnavite shrines in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. Valvachagoshtam Mahishasuramardhini Bhagavati Amman temple, Karipparai Bhagavati Amman temple, Kalliyankadu Bhagavati temple, Colachel Mutharamman temple, Midalam Bhagavati Amman temple are some of the noteworthy temples of Mother goddess. Deiva Vinayaga temple at Alur and Kulasekhara Pillaiyar shrine at Padmanabhapuram are note worthy for Vinayaga worship. At Kumarakoil, Subrahmanya Swamy temple is dedicated to Lord Murugan. Charode Anai Sastha temple is noted for Lord Sastha. These show the rapid growth of Hinduism in these regions from ninth to nineteenth century. These temples played important roles in the socio-political life of the Hindus of the ancient period. Village life then centred a round the temple. The temple festivals were the most important events in the year looking forward to by the village folks. The fairs, which were often associated with these temple festivals, were miniature exhibitions and the people enjoyed much during the festival days.

Christianity in Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks was introduced straight from the land of Jesus Christ not long after his crucifixion. Tradition associates its introduction with St.Thomas, (52-68 A.D.) one of the twelve Apostles of Jesus christ. The church of Thiruvithamkodu in Kalkulam taluk is one of the oldest in the world, older than that of any in India. Then St. Francis Xavier baptized many coastal area people to Christianity in 16th century A.D. The London Missionary Society started their proselytising activities in 1806 A.D. under the leadership of a German by name Ringeltaube. The mission flourished only due to the influence of the British Residents.

The service of protestant missionaries in the field of education, medicine, technical training and socio-economic liberation of the lower classes had played a significant role in the progress and upward mobility of the people. At the beginning of the 20th century, one finds a well established indigenous protestant Christian community in Kalkulam. The converts to Roman Catholic Christianity were originally the fisher folk residing near the coastal areas of Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. In fact, at first, the presence of a Catholic centre at Mulagumoodu reveals that Nadars of interior areas also came under the catholic fold. Unlike the Christian and the Hindu population which intermingled, Muslims concentrated in a few centres like Thengappattanam, Thiruvithamkodu, Thuckalay, Manalikkarai and Colachel. Among the places of worship, the mosques in Thiruvithamkodu and Thuckalay were are very famous. Muslims on their part respect the customs of the country and maintain a friendly relation with the local population.

Apart from various religions, Hindu temples constitute a predominant place in the society. Mostly, the temples received many kinds of donations or gifts from individuals, local people, merchants, wayfarers, royal family members, devadasis, women and the rulers of several dynasties. They made donations in the form of land, money, paddy, village, oil, lamp, livestock including cows and buffaloes, utensils, images of gods and goddesses, structural additions in the temple, temple construction and renovations. The temple became not only a place of worship but the very focus of the entire life of the people of a village. It has been rightly said of Hindu temples that they were fortresses, treasuries, court-houses, parks, fairs, exhibition sheds, halls of learning and of pleasure, all in one. Several temples have afforded protection for people against Marauders and invaders. In various ways, temples have proved themselves as agents of poor relief. As landholder, consumer of goods and services and

as employer and in short as the focus of social life and development, the temples of medieval times have played unique role. Above all, the temple as well as the *matha* attached to it served as the centre of cultural and educational activity.

To sum up it may safely be concluded that the historical primacy enjoyed by inscriptions as source material rests on the sure premise that any given epigraph contains, in different degrees of historicity, eye witness accounts of rulers, officials and commoners as also on matters pertaining to administration, polity, society, economics, religion and donations.

SUGGESTIONS

The inscriptions of Kanyakumari district are available in six volumes of publications released by Tamilnadu Government Archaeological Department. Before the reorganisation of Linguistic states, the inscriptions of this district were published in Seven volumes of Travancore Archaeological Series (T.A.S) in a scattered manner. Besides these the ASI had also published some inscriptions in their publications.

Of the Tamilnadu government volumes, three volumes are dedicated for Agastiswaram taluk; one for Kalkulam taluk; one for Thovalai taluk and the sixth volume, recently published, contains the inscriptions from all over the district.

- For the researchers, it has to be much better to prepare a catalogue of these inscriptions in chronological order.
- Another book could be prepared, concentrating on the Kings of different dynasties.
- The third book may be combined for the inscriptions that reveal social customs, Kings orders, and the inscriptions containing the informations regarding agriculture, etc.
- Another book could be combined listing place names, personal names, etc.
- A research can be carried out with the help of Tamil Scholars and linguistic people as to the language of inscriptions through the ages.
- A research on the foreign invasions and the subsequent changes accured in this district could be traced through the inscriptions available.
- In recent years, in the name of renovation, the temples and other buildings are being sand-blasted. The letters of inscriptions being are blasted. In some other temples, the inscriptions are white washed or painted over. Another serious danger affecting the safety of stone inscriptions, particularly in the south and more so in Tamilnadu is the renovation and more so in Tamilnadu is the renovation of temples by private parties. The compound walls of most of the early temples of Tamilnadu contain slab inscriptions inscribed and originally arranged in running order, many such slabs going into the formation of one inscription. At times of renovation, these slabs are removed and, in the act of reconstruction, arranged pellmell and some of the connecting inscribed slabs even thrown away or destroyed. It is necessary to have fool-proof arrangements to ensure that all such ancient temples are not

renovated without prior intimation to the Archaeological Survey of India and/ or the state Departments of Archaeology.

- It has been an age-old practice in towns and villages to convert inscribed slabs into objects of worship and besmear them with lime, vermine, oil and other sticky and grasy substances. Years of such superstitious adoration has resulted in thick coatings on the written surfaces, defying removal even by chemical treatment.
- Inscribed stone slabs not forming integral parts of structures and lying loose in villages and towns stand the danger of stones and are many times used in the place of bricks for constructing walls. It is gratifying to note that a considerable number of these slabs is being removed to the various museums in the country, governmental as well as private. This step no doubt ensures the safety of the inscribed slabs.
- Proper instructions should be given to maintain the existing inscriptions in condition. They may be copied and proper records may be maintained in the office and also in the central office. They should be made available to visitors. There is a need for awareness to protect the available inscriptions in good conditions.
- Proper training may be conducted with the experts for the local elites as to how to read the inscriptions.
- It is regretted to note that for the past ten years the Archaeological Department of Kanyakumari District have not unearthed any new inscription. Where as are association functioning in the name of "Chembavalam Research Base Trust, Nagercoil", are found out many new inscriptions and are being published in *Avanam*, an Annual Journal released by the Archaeological Society of Thanjavur, C/o.Department of Maritime History and Marine Archaeology, Tamil University, Thanjavur.

- Inscriptions found in Pattharai Siva temple, Maruthankodu Siva temple and Thickerichi Siva temple of Vilavancode taluk has not been deciphered yet.