

**WORSHIP AND FESTIVALS FIGURING IN THE LATER PANDYA INSCRIPTIONS****<sup>1</sup>S.Karthika**

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The later Pandya kings who ruled from Tenkasi region made a number of grants particularly the grant of lands from the time of Arikesari Parakrama Pandya .During their tenure of 200 years the rulers have taken great interest in conducting regular worship and offerings. Kings have established the day of special worship as sandhi. Mostly the days of special worship have been called after the name of the ruler . Besides conducting the regular worship several festivals have been instituted and provision was made to meet the requirements . In the 2<sup>nd</sup> +23<sup>rd</sup> year 1445A.D of Parakrama Pandya lands have been allotted from Tenkasi Vayulanpadi parru , Kunrakudi, Parakrama Pandyanallur , Vallaimuttam , Nallanpillaiperral , were endowed to conduct special festival to god Visvanatha . A special occasion was also established on the day of Makha – nakshatra in the month of Masi when the abhisheka is the supply of rice , vegetables , sandal , camphor , saffron , rose water , garlands (tirumalai) tirupparivattam , lamp offerings . In Saka 1390 (1468 A.D) falling in the 2<sup>nd</sup> + 37<sup>th</sup> year , Kulasekhara granted additional lands in Kuverakkudipparru alias Jayaviraramappereri , when the lands originally given by king Parakrama Pandya to Sivandaperumal – Pandya for the service in the shrine of goddess and in the shrine of the main deity were seen insufficient , for rendering services such as holding chauris , pounding turmeric , burning incense , preparing scented powder, etc. At the instance of Viramartandan alias Siraivaymuttavar, the king had arranged for the continuance of worship and service in the temple Saka year 1447 (1525A.D.).

During the reign of Abhirama Parakrama Pandya a festival called Senbagaraman sandhi was instituted in the temple of Visvanatha by Sankaranarayana-murti Venrumankonda Bhutalaviraramavarman, the muttavar of Jayatunga- nadu . Lands were granted in Saka 1468 (1547A.D.) in the village Pappankulam for the conduct of worship on the festive occasion .In Saka 1372 (1450A.D.) falling in the reign period of king Arikesari Parakrama Pandya a certain Ponnin Perumal, the king's nephew in whose name a service called after the name of king was instituted in the temple at Kadaiyanallur near Tenkasi Special festival days have been observed by the rulers. An inscription dated Kollam 685 (1509A.D.) refers to the grant of paddy for providing offerings on festival days in the month of Karttigai in the temple of Ten-Tiru-Vengadamudaiya-Nayanar in Ten-Tiruvengadam alias Amarasapuri-chaturvedimangalam in Mulli-nadu in the presence of Sankarananda sripada of the matha . Another record from Athalanallur dated Kollam 727 (1551A.D.) states that Ramappanayaka under the orders of the king made a grant of land for conducting Chitra festival in the temple Gajendravarada Perumal.During the reign period of Tirunelveliperumal Viravenbamalai alias Kulasekhara son of Abhirama Parakrama Pandya dated Saka 1477 (1555A.D.) .

Prince Alagan Perumal Gunarama born in the Asterism Moola endowed lands including Arinjarpiratti in Kurumarai-nadu to god Visvanatha for a festival to be conducted on his birthday

every year. In the reign of Kulasekhara son of Abhirama Parakrama Pandya dated Saka 1470 the king Tirunelvelipperumal son of Abhirama Parakrama Pandya ordered for the permission of taxes in favour of the temple for worship and offerings on the occasion a special service called Vira Venbamalai sandhi instituted after him and for a special festival on the day of his Asterism Asvathi in the month of Avani. This Kulasekhara was the elder brother Tirunelveli-Perumal who was born in the Asterism Asvathi . Another record dated 1474 (1552A.D.) Paritapi of king Tirunelvelipperumal alias Kulasekhara mention that the lands were granted for the conduct of the Vaigasi Visagam festival in the abhisheka mandapa built by him in the temple of Visvanatha . Also provision was made for the conduct of the sacred bath, worship and offerings to the god on the day of asterism Asvathi of the king .

The above prince the son of Parakrama prince Gunaraman Alagan Perumal gave lands at Arinjerpipiratti in Kurumarai- nadu to the temple of Visvanatha for a festival called Kudiraiyidu Purana tirunal on the days of his natal star Moola in the month of Avani every year. Another record of the same date mentions that a certain Ramanathan was appointed as the temple poet of conferring on him the title Marudavanakkavirayan and granted to him certain lands and a house, tax free . He had evidently to attend on the two days of the (Ke)ttai festival and to compose poems for is occasion. Tirunelvelipperumal Viravenbamalai alias Kulasekhara's son and successor Alagan Perumal Ativiraraman alias Srivallabha in his 3<sup>rd</sup> year and dated Saka 1488 (1566A.D.) Kshaya had granted lands in a village in Vadavarinadu excepting Devadaya and Brahmadeya in it for conducting worship thrice daily offerings named after Kodandaraman Srivala kalingarayan he is said to have granted a garden land for the conduct of Vasantha festival as mentioned in the record of Ativiraraman dated Saka 1490 (1568A.D.)

In the year 1493 (1571A.D.) The king called Srivalamaran is referred to have gifted tax free for Sribali and other festivals to the of Sivala Vinnavar-Emberuman at Puliur alias Kulasekharanallur in Tennari-nadu it also record the gift of land at Vindanur in Kurumarai-nadu for the Ramanujakudam built in front of the shrine of the god by Udaiyar Kulasehara Kalingarayan .In Saka 1494 (1572A.D.) lands were given for offerings to be made on 6<sup>th</sup> day of the Masi tirunal when the ceremony of the goddess giving her milk to Sambanda was being celebrated .His contribution as a builder of the mandapa in front of the shrine of the goddess is a good addition . At the instance of the Prince Abhirama Sundara Varatunga Pandya in Saka 1496 (1574 A.D.) lands were gifted by king Ativirarama Srivallabha to a certain Meykkumperumal Parakrama Pandya mudali for conducting Vasantham festival to the goddess Ulagamuludumudaiya –Nayaki. Ativirarama also donated village called Sambandanallur in Saka 1508 (1586A.D.) for the conduct of Chithirai barani festival and for the sacred bath of the goddess Ulagammai.

In Saka 1597 and 42<sup>nd</sup> year (1605A.D.) of this king , lands were given to the goddess as an abhisheka-kattalai in the same newly built goddess shrine by a certain lady Tadi sadaichchi. It may be recalled that a certain Urudaiyamudali seems to have repaired and re-consecrated the shrine of the goddess in the temple of Ulagamuludumudaiya-nachchiyar .The involvement of offerings and individuals in conducting festivals and making donations for the worship in this temple give us a glimpse into the religious activities .It is but common that various sections of the society would have taken part on different festive occasions . These festivities have contributed to the mingling of the people of different strata of the society .The elaborate grants made for these occasions have enriched the economic condition of the temple in particular and the state in general.

**Notes & Reference:**

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- [4] Ibid.,A.R.Ep.no.538/1917
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