

## **Chapter III**

# **Social Integration**

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## CHAPTER III

### SOCIAL INTEGRATION

Temple is one of the most significant components of south Indian culture. Apart from their religious significance and aesthetic value, temples have significant social and economic impact on the communities in which they are located.<sup>1</sup> Temples are the basis for building resources, power, prestige and political support.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Temples and empire**

The temples have long held significance in the area. Temples owned and farmed land in the Chola and Vijayanagar empires, lent money, hired a sizable retinue, built schools, and supported charitable causes. The prestige and resources of the temples were skillfully utilized by mediaeval emperors to manage their domains. Temple officers were employed as state administrators and revenue intermediaries, temple funds were taxed, and the prestige of the temples was manipulated as a sign of imperial control. Only by influencing important local institutions like temples could emperors convert military superiority to more efficient rule in a society as dispersed as mediaeval South India.<sup>3</sup>

#### **Temple in South Indian Society**

In the Madras Presidency at the turn of the century, there were roughly 75,000 temples. Majority of them were modest, poor, and had only one priest and a few brass ornaments. However, there would be at least one large temple in every significant village or town, some of which were open to a wider segment of the community while others were used exclusively by one caste or sect.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Baker, *South India: Political Institutions and Political Change* (Madras: The Macmillan Company of India Limited, 1975), p.69

<sup>2</sup> Das R.K, *Temples of Tamilnad* (Bombay, 1962)

<sup>3</sup> Nagaswamy R, "South Indian Temple as an Employer", *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, (Vol. II, No. 4, 1965), pp.367-372

<sup>4</sup> Ramesan N, *Temples and Legends of Andhra Pradesh* (Bombay, 1962)

There were significant shrines and pilgrimage centres, in a select few large towns and locations of sanctity, that drew thousands of devotees each year. Many temples were concentrated in the southernmost districts (Madurai, Ramnad, Trichinopoly, Thanjavur, and Thirunelveli), where the great mediaeval empires, that built the temples, had flourished and where the Muslim invasions that reduced them to size, had barely penetrated. Most districts could have one or two extremely wealthy temples. These included the Trichinopoly rock temple, the Sri Minakshi in Madurai, the Brihideswara in Thanjavur and the Rameswaram shrine.

Since the beginning of time, followers have given lands, jewels, and money for upkeep, and the major shrines, which were frequented by emperors, nobles, soldiers, traders, and landowners, have expanded and flourished much like the monasteries of mediaeval Europe. For example, five Saivite shrines, each made about a lakh rupee a year in the Thirunelveli District in 1925.<sup>5</sup> The shrine in Tirupathi is the richest of all the southern temples (in Chittoor District, now in Andhra Pradesh). In the late Nineteenth Century, its annual revenue was five lakhs and today, it is more than a lakh per day.<sup>6</sup>

Many temples had accumulated sizable land holdings during this process. One of the biggest landowners in South India is the Tirupathi temple, which, by the early 20th Century had acquired three full taluks (revenue subdivisions with an average of 375,000 acres each). Thanjavur, the richest of the Tamil Districts, reports temples, on an estimated third of its land in the 1950s. These properties were leased, and the rent payments went toward the temple's revenue. Many of the lands owned by temples had enjoyed tax concessions and thus they were thought to be especially valuable for rent.

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<sup>5</sup> G.O. 3547 (LSG), 2 August 1926, MRO.

<sup>6</sup> Srinivasa Rao V.N, Tirupati Sri Venkateswara-Balaji (Madras, 1949): Subbaramiah S, Finances of an Indian Temple: A Case Study of the Finances of the Tirupathi-Tirumalai Devasthanams 1951-63 (Jullundur, 1968), p.4

Since many of these lands were acquired as donations from pious devotees, they tended to be dispersed over a large area. However, the temples tended to concentrate their economic power over their localities by acquiring land close to the temple and investing a large portion of their income there. The temples gave jobs to many people, including priests to carry out rituals, administrators to oversee finances and lands, craftsmen to maintain the building's structure and the objects of worship, and many more.

There was fierce competition for the most important positions. These positions were highly prized because they offered status and chances for personal advancement. There were typically one hundred men, most of them of high status in the community, who applied when the top administrative position at the Madurai Sri Minakshi temple was declared vacant. The temples awarded lucrative contracts for the upkeep of the structures and idols as well as for the provision of festival and ceremonial requirements.<sup>7</sup> The temples frequently constructed markets and shops on their grounds. Some of the large markets in Madras City were connected to temples, and the Big Temple operated the main market in Thirunelveli.

The largest annual fair, where 100,000 head of cattle were traded, took place during the annual Chittrai festival at the Madurai Temple. Temples had a significant amount of control over the local economy through the management and leasing of shops and stalls as well as the organisation of these annual fairs.<sup>8</sup> The temples frequently served as moneylenders, expanding both their sphere of influence and overall wealth.<sup>9</sup>

The social life of the communities where the temples were located was also very important. In the beginning, they planned events and supported the arts. The traditional arts of South India included sculpture in temples, dancing in temples, and music in temples. Additionally, they patronised education. In addition to operating traditional

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<sup>7</sup> G.O. 1984 (LSG), 2 May 1935, MRO.

<sup>8</sup> G.O. 1973 (LSG), 6 April 1934, MRO.

<sup>9</sup> Madras Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee Vol. 2 (Madras, 1930), p.279

Siddhantic and Vedantic schools, many of the larger temples have recently supported secular and scientific education. The Temple at Tirupathi founded a university in South India. Common people received more worldly entertainment from the devadasis, girls who were devoted to the temple and trained to perform before the gods.<sup>10</sup> Temples provided food for the needy and donated money to charitable organisations.

Finally, temples served as judges of social standing in the area. The accepted hierarchy of the communities and individuals in the area had important outward manifestations, such as the privilege to enter specific areas of the temple, the right to participate in specific ceremonies, and the order of precedence in specific rites and festivals.<sup>11</sup> Temples were both status makers and breakers. Gaining the ratification of the temple could enable groups and individuals to elevate social status and enjoy a better economic position. Successful warriors would frequently persuade temple Brahmans to perform ceremonies in the Middle Ages, giving them a new ritual status in line with their military prowess.<sup>12</sup>

The importance of the mutts, which are small monastic institutions where a holy and learned man (the mathadhipathi or pandarasanidhi) lived with his close disciples, was not limited to temples.<sup>13</sup> Many powerful men looked to the mutts and their mathadhipathis for spiritual direction. These followers donated costly gifts and land to the mutts. Subordinate mutts, temples, and charitable organisations were frequently administered by mutts. The main mutt's influence had a wide range because of their possessions, those of their satellites, as well as those of their followers, who were dispersed over a large area. The Saivite Mutt at Tiruvadathurai near Mayavaram in the Thanjavur District was one of the biggest mutts at the beginning of the 20th Century.

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<sup>10</sup> Frazie J.G, *The Golden Bough: Adonis, Attis, Osiris*, Vol. 1 (London, 1914), pp.61-65

<sup>11</sup> McKim Marriott, *Caste Ranking and Community Structure in Five Regions of India and Pakistan* (Poona, 1960), p.33

<sup>12</sup> Burton Stein, *Social Mobility in the Caste System in India*, (Paris and The Hague, 1968), pp.78-95

<sup>13</sup> Ramaswamy Tatachiar D, *The Vanavamalai Temple and Mutt* (Tinne velly, 1937), pp.30-31

It owns sizable endowments. 3000 acres of land are owned by this mutt in Thanjavur, 1000 acres in Madurai and 25,000 acres in Thirunelveli. Two lakh rupees was the estimated total annual income. The managers and priests of about fifteen temples in mayavaram and other districts are chosen by the head of this mutt, who also manages their financial affairs. Some of these temples are extremely significant. On the anniversary of the mutt's founder, several private individuals in this district visit the head of it and present him with gifts.<sup>14</sup>

In the area, mutts and temples possessed extraordinary economic and social power. The temples were naturally drawn into local politics because they owned land, had enormous wealth, frequently controlled markets and credit, awarded lucrative jobs and contracts, organised festivals, supported learning and the arts, ran charities, and regulated the social status. Hence control over the temple included some degree of control over land, commerce, and credit, as well as patronage in the form of jobs, contracts, and gifts. It also included a role in dictating social status and the prestige of overseeing the main social events of the year. The temple served as a source of authority and a sign of supremacy in the conflicts over power and resources that characterised local politics.

The families of some temples' original founders still held control over others. Some, particularly in the Northern Circars, were regarded as the zamindars' private property, others were governed by a local caste (such as the Kanyaka Parameshwari temples, whose management committees were selected by the Komati Community)<sup>15</sup>, others were governed by a mutt and in still others, the temple functionaries had usurped authority.<sup>16</sup> This still left a sizable portion over which managers, trustees, and committees, selected from the neighbourhood, exercised control.

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<sup>14</sup> Hemingway F.R, Gazetteer of the Tanjore District, Vol. 1 (Madras, 1906), p.232

<sup>15</sup> G.O. 3666 (LSG), 8 September 1928, SAH.

<sup>16</sup> Ramakrishna Aiyer V.G, The Economy of a South Indian Temple (Annamalainagar: Annamalai university publication, 1946)

Every temple has had a manager and a trustee since the Chola Era, and they shared executive control over the temple and its resources, staff, and rituals. A Committee was formed in a number of the local temples, and it appointed and directed these officers. The local elite were chosen for the committee, either by election or co-option, or some other type of appointment. This was an ideal pattern because the control of temples was very crucial, and the committee was more representative. When the Government looked into temple administration in the 1920s, it discovered that proper records of temple receipts and expenditures were rarely kept, surplus funds were not always invested properly, and temple lands were occasionally leased to trustees' relatives and friends and occasionally alienated on questionable legal justifications or for personal gain.

Services were frequently neglected, and service alienation and resumption were common due to conflict among trustees. The temple committees were frequently inactive or dormant, and even those that did show some activity, occasionally struggled to exert effective control and supervision due to lack of funding or for other factors. The situation was made worse by the fact that many temples were not under any committee's control.<sup>17</sup>

While the richer temples were frequently burdened with excessive attention, the poorer ones suffered frequently from neglect. Six Christians and two Muslims equally managed the Devacottah temples. The temple committee in Erode had no religious bias at all because, for twenty five years, it was led by militant atheist E. V. Ramaswami Naicker.<sup>18</sup>

The southern revenue system ultimately amounted to little more than the formalisation of already widespread practices. The British Raj was reluctant to acknowledge the legacy of earlier empires when it came to the temples. The Madras Government realised the significance of the temples as a source of income and as a

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<sup>17</sup> G.O. 1337 (LSG), 9 April 1927, MRO.

<sup>18</sup> Chidambaranar, *Tamilar Talaivar* (Erode, 1960), pp.64-65

concentration of power and influence,<sup>19</sup> and hence the Madras Government formally assumed all the rights that it believed its imperial predecessors had exercised over the temples in 1817. But it completely gave up this control within half a century.

This was caused by factors outside of Madras. London and Calcutta the places were where imperial policy was decided. Evangelicals believed that such a countenance of heathenism was unfitting for a government that claimed to be religiously neutral, while the veterans in administration were content to inherit a role in administering and mediating in “religious” affairs. The Government adopted a policy of non-interference in temple affairs, across all its domains in the 1830s, as a result of pressure from the Missions, a few scandals involving government administration of the temples (especially the controversy surrounding the Jagannath Temple in Orissa), and fear of the political dangers posed by the fierce religious revivalism in North India. For another thirty years, the Madras Government resisted giving up some of its rights regarding temples, but in 1863, it was finally compelled to do so.<sup>20</sup>

The Government had no control at all in the south and gave the temples to anyone bold enough to claim them. The temple was given to a family, zamindar, or mathadhipathi in cases where they could support the historical claim. In other places, the Government created committees, with lifetime appointments, for both elected and co-opted members.

The need for supra-local politics and the expanding imperial Government gradually took temples back to the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. Twelve bills to reform temple administration and reimpose government control, were drafted in

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<sup>19</sup> Pate H.R, Gazetteer of the Tinnevely District, Vol.1 (Madras, 1917), p.313

<sup>20</sup> Chandra Mudaliar, “State and Religious Endowments in Madras”, *Madras University* (Madras, 1961), p.32



Madras, between 1878 (just fifteen years after the Madras Government was forced to relinquish control over temples) and 1915.<sup>21</sup>

The Justice Ministry passed the Hindu Religious Endowments Act in 1922 and 1926.<sup>22</sup> It did not represent a significant shift in the British meddling with the temples. The key components of the Act were created by Indians, who also carried out its directives. The initial draft was written by the Madras Government, which included stronger district committees and improved administrative plans. A Select Committee, made up of Indian legislators, added mutts to the law, expanded the authority of district committees, and established a centralised Endowments Board with authority over all the province's temples and their endowments.

The Board and the Ministers were tasked with selecting district temple committees and serving as local conflict arbitrators for temples and their assets.<sup>23</sup> These rules put the temples under a lot of centralised control, and observers at the time recognised their importance. The Madras Government under the Congress, did pass temple legislation in 1951.<sup>24</sup>

The Board requested information from 13,669 temples in 1927, to compile a list of the temples in the presidency and their endowments but it received only 229 satisfactory responses.<sup>25</sup> The Endowment Board and the Minister in charge of the temple portfolio, proposed the candidates for District Temple Committees, between 1926 and 1932. The Minister was able to influence local temple politics through his patronage, if not the methods themselves. The Ministers of the Justice Party were able to increase their influence in the communities, through these nominations and other formal powers of the

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<sup>21</sup> Chandra Mudaliar, "State and Religious Endowments in Madras", *Madras University* (Madras, 1961), p.64

<sup>22</sup> GOI Home Judicial file 427, 1926, NAI.

<sup>23</sup> G.O. 85 (Law, Legislative), 5 March 1923, MRO.

<sup>24</sup> Report of the Hindu Religious Endowments Commission 1960-62 (Madras, 1962), pp.23-26

<sup>25</sup> G.O. 1337 (LSG), 9 April 1927, MRO.

Endowments Board. Without a formal party organisation, the Ministers of the Justice Party were able to establish and maintain a provincial network through this and other forms of patronage in local self government.

The temples' long standing significance in local affairs stemmed from their enormous wealth, control over economic and social activity, and adjudication of local status. For example, the man in charge of the significant annual temple festival, benefited from both the extraterrestrial prestige of association with the holy occasion and a somewhat more mundane form of patronage in the form of contracts to meet the needs of the celebratory crowd and the deity. The right to control the temple was typically decided in the marketplace, making it one of the few places in South Indian society, where wealth and prestige were so concentrated.

The management of the temple mirrored and supported the local power structure. Outsiders who wanted to have an impact on local affairs always focused on the temples. Emperors in the Middle Ages used them as tools and propaganda for their rule. Thirupathi Temple, for example, was courted by Aurangzeb, the sultans of Golconda, Hyder Ali, the French, the East India Company, and a number of local Poligar chieftains during the chaos of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries as they fought to fill the political vacuum in South India.<sup>26</sup>

Temple was a valuable resource for Indian politicians. Local men could use their control of temples and temple resources to gain access to the new institutions of government in their community, province, and country as well as to establish positions of power and influence at higher levels of politics.

The trusteeship of the Tirupathi Temple served three times as the launching pad for a ministerial office in Andhra Pradesh during the first twenty years of independent

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<sup>26</sup> Srinivasa Rao V. N, Sri Venkateswara-Balaji, (Madras, 1949), pp. 157-160

India.<sup>27</sup> Provincial politicians struggled to exert control over the temples as a way to broaden their network of support across the Province. Courts were used to exercise this control, and then later, the administrative apparatus itself. Political rivalry over the temples in the Province was just as acrimonious as it had been in the neighbourhood. Additionally, more and more local elements were compelled to consider sources of power outside the locality and were drawn into the politics of the larger world as a result of the importation of temples and other similar local affairs into provincial politics in this way.

The Justice Party, the first successful provincial party in the South, grew and became more powerful with the help of temple patronage. The temple politics was crucial in drawing men into the nationalist movement. Instead of dissolving the local arenas, provincial and national arenas of politics were being consolidated.

### **Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments Department**

Prior to 1925, steps were taken to ensure effective management and oversight of the administrative tasks of temples. In 1925, the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board was founded.<sup>28</sup> A Board was in charge of overseeing Hindu temples, charitable endowments, and holy mutts. When the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Board became a government department, the Board was abolished in 1951. The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, which came into force in 1951, had some implementation issues. The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act 22/1959 was passed in 1959, to address these issues and incorporate various amendments.<sup>29</sup>

This Act became operative on January 1, 1960. Periodically, necessary changes were made to the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act 1959. Through the

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<sup>27</sup> Subbaramiah S, *Finances of an Indian Temple*, (Jullundur, 1968), p.3

<sup>28</sup> “*Naṭaimuṟai nūl - Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments*” (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 1976)

<sup>29</sup> HR & CE, “Government of Tamil Nadu – Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department,” *NIC / TN HR&CE*, [hrce.tn.gov.in/hrcehome/hrce department.php](http://hrce.tn.gov.in/hrcehome/hrce%20department.php)

expansion of administration and the clarification of the purview and authority of the Commissioner and Subordinate Officers, it was made possible to oversee temples and charitable endowments.

### **Administrative Structure**

A member of the Indian Administrative Service is appointed as the Commissioner of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, in accordance with the Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act 1959 (as amended by Act 39/1996).<sup>30</sup> The Commissioner is in charge of the Department's overall operations and all its activities. In total, there are 2409 authorised positions in the administration of this Department, including those for the Commissioner, subordinate officers, executive officers, officers on deputation, office assistants, drivers, watchmen, and scavengers.<sup>31</sup> There are currently 1336 workers in this department. The following officers assist the Commissioner at Headquarters.<sup>32</sup>

- Additional Commissioner (General)
- Additional Commissioner (Enquiry)
- Additional Commissioner (Thiruppani)
- Joint Commissioner (Head Quarters)
- Joint Commissioner (Legal Cell)
- Joint Commissioner (Educational and Charitable Institutions)
- Joint Commissioner (verification)
- Assistant Commissioner (Legal cell)
- Assistant Commissioner (Village Temple Poosarigal Welfare Board)

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<sup>30</sup> "Policy Note - Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments" (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 2022), pp.16-17

<sup>31</sup> "Naṭaimuṟai nūl - Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments" (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 1976), pp.14-15

<sup>32</sup> HR & CE, "Government of Tamil Nadu – Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department." *NIC / TN HR&CE*, [hrce.tn.gov.in/hrcehome/hrce department.php](http://hrce.tn.gov.in/hrcehome/hrce%20department.php)

- Editor (Thirukkoil, a Monthly Magazine)

## **Temples**

The Hindu Religious and Charitable Department is in charge of 46,017 Hindu temples and Jain temples.<sup>33</sup>

4,78,283.59 acres of lands, 22600 buildings and 33665 locations, that belong to religious temples are under this Department's management.<sup>34</sup>

## **Hindu Religious & Charitable Endowments Schemes**

### **Annadhanam**

The purpose of the Annadhanam Scheme is to feed the devotees, who go to the temples to seek God's blessings. The programme began in 2002, and 754 temples now offer an afternoon meal. Daily Annadhanam services are offered at the Arulmigu Ranganathaswamy Temple in Srirangam and the Arulmigu Dhandayuthapaniswamy Temple in Palani. At present, alms are being given all day long at the three temples at Thiruthanikai, Samayapuram, and Thiruchendur, as the scheme has been expanded by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu from 2021–2022.<sup>35</sup>

### **Spiritual And Moral Classes**

In order to help children, to internalise the moral and ethical values enshrined in classical Tamil literature, through stories that reflect our cultural heritage and traditions, spiritual and moral classes are being held in all important temples.

### **Elephant Rejuvenation Camp**

Two elephants, from temples in Puducherry participated in the elephant rejuvenation camp on the banks of the Bhavani River near Thekkampatti, Twenty four

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<sup>33</sup> "Naṭaimurāi nūl - Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments" (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 1976), pp.3-10

<sup>34</sup> "Government of Tamil Nadu – Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department." NIC / TN HR & CE, [hrce.tn.gov.in/hrcehome/hrce temple.php](http://hrce.tn.gov.in/hrcehome/hrce%20temple.php)

<sup>35</sup> "Policy Note - Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments" (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 2022), p.70

temple and mutt elephants from Tamil Nadu attended this camp financial year of during the 2020–2021. Forty eight days are dedicated to run this camp.<sup>36</sup>

### **Kalaighnar Thalamarakandrugal Nadum Thittam**

Trees are a common symbol for deities, and they are used in many rituals. Every temple is associated with a particular tree, which is revered. In honour of the late former chief minister, Dr. Kalaighnar, a programme called Kalaighnar Thalamarakandrugal Nadum Thittam was created to plant one lakh sacred temple trees (Thalamarakandru) on temple grounds throughout the State.<sup>37</sup> On August 7, 2021, the Honorable Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu inaugurated the programme and planted a “Nagalinga” (Couroupita guianensis) sapling on the grounds of the HRCE Commissionerate.

### **Village Temple Poosarigal Welfare Board**

A separate Board, called the Village Temple Poosaris Welfare Board has been established, through which the benefits are being given to Poosaris, who perform poojas in village temples, that are not under the control of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department.<sup>38</sup>

### **Village Temple Poosaris Pension Scheme**

Retired Poosaris, who have served for more than 20 years in village temples outside of this Department’s direct control and who had reached the age of 60 are given a monthly pension of Rs. 3,000. Three thousand two hundred eighty one Poosaris have so far benefited from this plan.<sup>39</sup>

### **Oru Kala Pooja Scheme**

To give temples that lacked the resources to perform pooja even once a day, our kala Pooja scheme was introduced in 1986. 12,959 temples received a corpus of 1.00 lakh

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<sup>36</sup> Policy Note, Op. Cit., p.73

<sup>37</sup> Policy Note, Op. Cit., p.68

<sup>38</sup> “Policy Note - Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments” (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 2022), p.121

<sup>39</sup> Policy Note, Op. Cit., p.117

rupees each so that the one time Pooja could be performed, by using the interest. The Government will add an additional corpus of 130.00 crores this year, doubling the corpus for each temple, from 1.00 lakh to 2.00 lakh.<sup>40</sup>

### **Refresher Training Course**

For the productive work of Archages, Bhattachariars, and Odhuvars, the refresher course scheme began in 1991. From 2011 to 2016, notable temples were chosen in each Division, under an Assistant Commissioner. This Scheme has benefitted 8436 temple priests.<sup>41</sup>

### **Appointment of Musicians**

During festivals, it is customary to play music in temples. Temples appoint sufficient number of musicians for this purpose.<sup>42</sup>

### **Appointment of Nathaswara Artists**

A corpus of Rs. 1 crore has been deposited, to enable payment for musicians recruited to play Nathaswaram, Thavil, and Thaala instruments, at a monthly salary of Rs. 1500, Rs. 1000, and Rs. 750, respectively. These ancient and financially strapped temples have been praised by Alwars and Nayanmars in their hymns.

### **Welfare Schemes for Temple Employees**

The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department oversees the work of various categories of employees in temples.<sup>43</sup> The following is a list of the welfare programmes, available to temple employees.

1. Employees Provident Fund Scheme.
2. Departmental Pension Scheme.
3. Family Benefit Fund Scheme.

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<sup>40</sup> "Policy Note - Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments" (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 2022), p.75

<sup>41</sup> Policy Note, Op. Cit., p.114

<sup>42</sup> Policy Note, op.cit, p.117

<sup>43</sup> Policy Note, op.cit, pp.115 - 121

4. Special Provident Fund and Gratuity Scheme.
5. Temple Employees Welfare Fund Scheme.
6. Pension Scheme for Archakar, Odhuvar, Vedhaparayanar, Arayars, DivyaPrabhandam reciters and Musicians.
7. Advance for Marriage, Festival and for purchase of Vehicles.
8. Appointment on Compassionate Grounds.
9. Kudamuzhukku Incentive.
10. Additional Incentive for Annual Festivals.
11. Pongal Ex-gratia Payment.
12. Financial Assistance for Higher Education of Children of Temple Employees
13. Providing Uniforms and Identity Cards for Temple Employees.
14. Computer Training for Temple Employees.
15. Providing Free Bicycles for Archakas / Poosaris of Temples where Oru Kala Pooja is Performed.

### **Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Facilitation to the people**

In their requests for funding for 2021–2022, the HR and CE stated that they would establish medical facilities in some important temples throughout the State, that draw sizable crowds. Earlier this year, such medical facilities were established in ten temples. The facility is already available at the temples of Melmalayanur Angalaparameswari, Tiruchendur Subramaniaswamy, and Thiruvannamalai Arunachaleswarar.<sup>44</sup>

It was announced this year that five additional temples would receive medical facilities. At the Meenakshi Amman Temple, the Kallazhagar Temple in Madurai, the Irukkankudi Arulmigu Mariamman Temple in the Virudhunagar District, the Arulmigu Bannari Amman Temple in the Erode District, and the Arulmigu Sankaranarayanawamy

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<sup>44</sup> “Five more major temples in Tamil Nadu get medical centres”, The Times of India, 03 December 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/five-more-major-temples-in-tn-get-med-centres/articleshow/95952468.cms>



Temple in the Sankarankovil District, medical facilities have been introduced. These facilities have beds, oxygen tanks, first-aid stations, and emergency medications. During the darshan hours, doctors and multidisciplinary medical staff would be on duty. All these five centres are located close to the temples.

Educational institutions are run by the Arulmigu Dhandayuthapani Swami Thirukoil in Palani, Dindigul District. The ancient hill shrine, also known as the Palani Temple, draws pilgrims from all over Tamil Nadu, including the neighbouring State of Kerala and nations like Malaysia and Singapore, which are home to a sizable population of Tamils, who are of Indian descent. The Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR & CE) Department of Tamil Nadu is in charge of managing the place of worship, which is devoted to Lord Muruga.

The Government of Tamil Nadu inaugurated the free breakfast programme for students at schools and colleges, run by the Palani Temple in the Demand for Grants to the HR & CE Department for 2022–23, presented in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. The Chief Minister introduced the breakfast programme for government school students, in grades 1 through 5 on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022. CM had announced the plan in Assembly on May 7, 2022, marking the end of his first year in office. The programme for students attending public schools is known as “Mudalamaicharin Kaalai Unavu Thittam (Chief Minister’s Breakfast Scheme)” in Tamil.<sup>45</sup>

### **Poojas and Festivals**

Festivals play a vital role in everyone’s life. Poojas in temples are performed, based on Agama system. Special pooja is performed to Murugan on Kritikai day, every month.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> “Stalin launches breakfast scheme for students of TN temple-run schools, colleges”, The Times of India, 16 November 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/stalin-launches-breakfast-scheme-for-students-of-tn-temple-run-schools-colleges/articleshow/95557818.cms>

<sup>46</sup> Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.115

## **Navratri festival**

Navratri festival starts from the day after the new moon in the Tamil month of Puratasi. During the nine day festivals, special poojas and prayers are performed to Mother Goddess.<sup>47</sup>

## **Arudhara darshan**

Arudhara darshan and pooja are held on Tiruvadhirai Nakshatra, in the Tamil month of Margazhi.

## **Shivratri**

On the night of Shivratri, in the month of Masi, special poojas are performed to Lord Shiva.<sup>48</sup>

## **Somavaram**

Among the important fasts, in the month of Karthikai, Somavara Fast is the special one. Monday in the Tamil month of Kartikai is the most auspicious day for Shiva and hence Somavara fast is observed on Monday.

Somavaram means monday. Soman means Lord Shiva who is with Parvati. Moon has a special name called Soman. The scriptures say that this was first observed by the moon and hence it got its name as Somavara Fast.

## **Guru Poojai**

Guru Pooja takes place during temple festivals. People of Vijayamangalam and nearby villages regularly conduct Guru Pujas to sixty three Nayanmars.<sup>49</sup>

## **Karthigai Vizha**

During the Tamil month of Karthigai, people light the lamp known as Karthigai Deepam using Agal Vilakku (oil lamps). The idea behind this is that the oil, which we use to light the lamp, helps us to kill the germs in the atmosphere and it is good for health.

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<sup>47</sup> Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.115

<sup>48</sup> Henry Whitehead, The Village gods of south India (Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2006), p.35

<sup>49</sup> Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.116

Keeping in mind the employment of the Potters, this practice was in vogue. In earlier times every house had Maada Kuli or Deepa Madam to light the lamps every day. Majority of Murugan temples are in hills and mountains. Walking and trekking are the best practices to boost our immune system and rejuvenate our body.

### **Pongal the Harvest Festival**

Pongal is the harvest festival of the Tamils. Known as Sankranti elsewhere in India, Pongal is celebrated in the middle of January (usually on the 14th or 15th) and coincides with the movement of the Sun from Dakshinayanam (South) to Uttarayanam (North). Pongal is celebrated for four days to thank nature and cattle, who help agriculture.

### **Social Integration**

The phrase, “unity in diversity”, refers to the harmony and cohesion among diverse individuals or groups, which shifts the emphasis from a simple unity based on tolerance of physical, cultural, linguistic, social, religious, political, ideological and psychological differences to a more complex unity, based on the knowledge that difference enhances human interactions.<sup>50</sup> All religious people run shops in and around temples. Representatives of the Athar Jamad Masjid in Coimbatore distributed 5,000 water bottles to Hindu worshippers on Opanakkara Street. While Koniarnman Temple car fest procession (one of the city’s major Hindu religious gatherings) passed by the mosque, representatives of the Jamad stood outside and gave water bottles to the worshippers.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> State Council of Educational Research & Training, “Understanding Diversity” (Chennai: Government of Tamil Nadu, 2018), p.192

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Wilson, “A platform to strengthen communal harmony”, The Hindu, 05 March 2020, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Coimbatore/a-platform-to-strengthen-communal-harmony/article30985198.ece>.