

# Temple Administration in Vijayanagar Empire in Tamil Nadu

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## ABSTRACT

The Vijayanagara Empire (1336–1664 ce) ruled in South India from the early 14th to mid-17th centuries. At the peak of its power, the Vijayanagara Empire dominated the South Indian landscape, comprising a majority of the territory of modern-day Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, as well parts of Kerala. Vijayanagara was ruled by four dynasties: Sangama (1336–1485), Saluva (1485–1505), Tuluva (1505–1565), and Aravidu (1565–1664). The empire was founded and flourished at its eponymous first capital in Karnataka, and also occupied two later capitals at Penukonda and Chandragiri, in Andhra Pradesh. Vijayanagara economic prosperity was supported by agricultural intensification, organized taxation, and domestic and international trade. Elite patronage supported an elaborate courtly culture, including religious and secular architecture, sculpture and painting, literary and musical works, and shared modes of dress and communication. As Vijayanagara waned, it was supplanted by successor states and early European colonial powers.

**KEYWORDS:** Krishna Devaraya Vijayanagara kingdom, Medieval south India history Muslim conquest

## INTRODUCTION

The temples in India stand for the cultural symbols which talk about the egalitarian principle of the Tamils.<sup>1</sup> This symbolizes that all are born equal. The sculptures, paintings and artifacts of the temple tell about the daily life activities which reveal the historic resources of the early treasures. This speaks about the three aspects in Tamil language which are known to be literature, drama and music. The Hindu Religions and Charitable Endowments Boards as later formed and developed as a department entrusted with the responsibilities of maintaining the temples and also conducting the poojas and the festivals in keeping with the practices of the ancient culture and norms.<sup>2</sup> The historic and artistic value of the temple is protected in such a way that are preserved for many centuries by our ancestors. This is taken as a noble task and also their responsibility. The government is maintaining these temples in a good condition through endowment and charities. The devotees who come to the temples are given with good infrastructural facilities. The department is also taking steps to provide numerous schemes for the temples. These devotees come during the festivals and occasions and sometimes in ordinary times too.<sup>3</sup>

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## The Administration of Temple

An unique system is followed in the administration of the temple which is done on the social basis.<sup>4</sup> But that is not constantly done and it changes according to the need. This is because of the religious life that we have in the society, which cannot be ignored. The religious are connected to the belief system of the every individual. This is also meant to be a thread to correct a person to his god that depends on the need of the self and the divine belief.<sup>5</sup> This is how, the so called temple is the right place to connect and have a strong relationship of individual with god. Moreover, a religion is the superpower and depends on the beliefs of every human lives that is mingled with the supernatural being. All the beliefs on beings superior to human being are comprehended in a single word called religion. The Hindus believe that the temples are really important and the first place to learn their life lessons and those things shape the character, human life and mortal forms to have divine energy. By this way, temple is treated as a place to have in touch with both human and supernatural qualities which is felt to be a sacred one. This is also meant to be sacred ones because of the religious rites. This is a ground to establish communion with god, the

Almighty. Hence the essential elements of religious are belief in an worship of God.<sup>6</sup>

There are many numbers of temples with different art and culture, with different shapes for a wide range of gods and goddesses.<sup>7</sup> They are Lord Siva, Lord Vishnu, Lord Murugan, Lord Vinayagar, Vishnu and Siva. But they are no such equal number of temples built for Brahma, who is meant to be the creator (God of creation). This difference is because of the belief system. Devotees of different forms get protection from specific gods. Yet, simultaneously, numerous folk and village deities also are having their own temples. The services to personal gods were worshipped by Hindu through poojas and rituals.<sup>8</sup> Thus the temples emerged due to the concentration of mind of the devotees in realizing the infinite. Many of the Hindu Kings, rulers, emperors, traders and craftsman, merchants, nobles,<sup>9</sup> land owners, the common folk and also travellers and the visitors who come occasionally have given generous gifts and endowments to build numerous temples that have sponsored and patronized temples. The National department of Archaeology and Epigraphy and various publications like Archaeological Reports on Epigraphy, various inscriptional evidences documented by the State Tamilnadu, and the publication with few South Indian Temple Inscriptions have drawn the attention of various people. Many devotees have donated to the temples for various religious purposes like the cattles, money, land and other form of properties. This is donated to celebrate the festivals in the temple annually, and to build the residences, halls, orchards, groves, gardens and rest houses. This seems to be the most important one to have relationship with temples and devotees. The complex served as feeding house and offered *Vidhyadhana* and education.<sup>10</sup>

### The Hindu Religious Endowments

The Collectors were directed to render exact details about the religious institutions and they were ordered to make direct enquiries about the endowments. The Collector had to report to the Board of Revenue about the details regarding religious institutions foundations, establishments, their Trustees,<sup>11</sup> Managers or Superintendents along with the details of their appointing authorities. The Regulation of 1817 made East India Company as the successor to Hindu as well as Muslim rulers of India and the Company was to follow the policy of strict supervision over the native religious trusts and endowments. The following was the machinery formed to manage the Hindu Religious Endowments.<sup>12</sup>

1. The Board of Revenue
2. The Collectors (The Agents)

3. The Superintendent, Trustees and Managers (The Managerial staff)<sup>13</sup>

They were forbidden from confining themselves with the funds or other properties. For the benefit of the institution, they were to employ the usual ways. It was obvious that the role of Collectors according to the regulation of 1817 was a general superintendence and not a deep, devoted and detailed management.<sup>14</sup> The Collectors should appropriate lands and endowments for the specific purpose granted and should not resume even any part of it for the benefit of the government.<sup>15</sup> The Regulation VII of 1817 clearly indicates the view points of the government with the temples. The facts relating to Temple of *Thiruchengode* as given below can be taken into account.

**The Thittam:** For preparing *Neiyvedya* and *Prasadam* for the Lord and Alwars, the provisions for ghee and rice were stipulated.<sup>16</sup>

**Kaingaryam** The duties and salaries of different types of servants- A Ranga Rao (*Serishtrar* and A. Subbarao (*Jahrhildar*) prepared the list.

**Code:** The Collector of *Salem* prepared the codes of conduct for having an objective form of administration of the temple and that came into effect on 25 July, 1821.

**Sawa:** It was a vivid description of the different aspects of the temple.

**Jauabpath:** This Statement prepared in 1819 contained details about the temple properties, income, expenditure, assets and liabilities, religious services and endowments etc.<sup>17</sup>

### Paimayishi Account

This was meant for the measurement of temple and account of deities and images. It was prepared in 1819 and it consisted of all the measurements of the temples and the buildings along with the details of the deities maintained and preserved in the supervised the *Vijayanagar* Temple and had control over the entire staff of the temple.<sup>18</sup> He prepared a list of all the servants of the temple along with their duties, descriptions and salaries. Importance was assigned to increase the income of the state from the temples. Much attention was paid to maintain the records regarding collections from the devotees either in the form of cash or kind. Proper accounts were maintained regarding the income and expenditure. The objects and materials donated by the devotees and philanthropists were preserved. The magistrates and police officials were instructed to have vigil over the pilgrims. Further, the *poligars* as well as *Zamindars* were directed to safeguard the pilgrims from the

robbers. For the execution of such duties, they were given lands. In 1836 after the complete abolition of the *poligars*, regular police system was introduced to maintain law and order and also to protect the pilgrims. The Collectors were given in charge of noticing the activities of the *archakas* or priests and *goomastas* (Clerks). All offerings of money were credited with the *Circar* accounts. The Collectors were allowed to interfere with the appropriation of funds of religious and charitable institutions under the control of *Zamindars* and others. At times of disputes among the local authorities of the temples also, the Collector was allowed to settle the cases.

### Mutts

At present, there are 56 Mutts and 19 Specific Endowments attached thereto, under the control of this department. To ensure proper administration of these mutts the Commissioner is assisted by a separate Audit Section consisting of a Regional Audit Officer, two Audit Inspectors, and two Assistants in the Head Quarters.

### Appointment of Gurukkal

Appar Swamigal conditions at Thirumalpuru, a Holy Saivaite temple with his songs. People who adopt the ideologies of saints as him are emphasized for a period for long time. It makes clear that discriminating ideas should not be allowed in making poojas at the public worship places. Keeping aside the caste as a qualification is foremost. This social concept has been resolved by this government for implementation. Considering this, a government order was passed telling that all communities of Hindus can become Archakas of any temples of Hindu.

### Appointment of Trustees

Many means and ways for appointing trustees for genuine administration of the temples and religious institutions is provided by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act 1959. Trust Board schemes or hereditary trustees administrate certain temples and Religious institutions. According to the classification of the temples and powers provided on the Assistant Commissioner, the Joint Commissioner, the Commissioner and the government, they appointed trustees as per the provisions of the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Act. Every Board of trustees should carry of more than two and not more than five member of them one member must be from scheduled caste or scheduled tribe. It must also contain one woman member. Appropriately, non-hereditary trustees of three numbers shall be appointed by the Commissioner, Joint Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner to the Religious Institution as the case may be. This must depend upon the classification of the temple as per the provisions of

the above mentioned act. The other two non-hereditary trustees will be selected by the Government. The government will appoint all the non-hereditary trustees of the temples that were published under section 46(iii).<sup>19</sup>

### Golden Cars in the Temple

Many ways are there for devotees to fulfill their oath while visiting the temples. The most important way is to pull the Golden Car. Such that for the fulfillment of their demand, many new golden cars are made by this government to encourage the devotees in temples. On regarding this Eleven temples disclosed below were newly built Golden cars and procession of Golden Car is now being performed in mentioned temples.<sup>20</sup>

- Arulmigu Mundakakanniyamma temple, Mylapore, Chennai.
- Arulmigu Jambukeswarar temple, Thiruvanaikkaval, Tiruchirappalli.
- Arulmigu Chandrasoodeswarar temple, Hosur, Krishnagiri District.
- Arulmigu Subramaniaswamy temple, Thiruparankundram, Madurai.
- Arulmigu Anjaneyaswamy temple, Namakkal.
- Arulmigu Mariamma temple, Karur.
- Arulmigu Dhandumariamman temple, Coimbatore.
- Arulmigu Karunellinathaswamy temple, Thirutthangal, Virudhunagar District.
- Arulmigu Subramaniaswamy temple, Pachamalai, Gobichettipalayam, Erode District.
- Arulmigu Vettudaiyar Kaliamman temple, Ariyakurichi, Sivagangai District.
- Arulmigu Kannudaiya Nayakiamman Temple, Nattarasankottai, Sivagangai District.

With the above, there are totally 38 Golden Cars are available in the temples of Tamil Nadu. In the following 13 temples, made of new Golden Car is in well progressed:-

- Arulmigu Kottai Mariamma temple, Dindugul.
- Arulmigu Vijayanagar temple, Madurai, Nagapattinam District
- Arulmigu Masaniamman temple, Aanaimalai, Coimbatore District.
- Arulmigu Vekkaiamma temple, Tiruchirappalli.
- Arulmigu Angalaparameswariamma temple, Melmalaiyanur, Villupuram District.
- Arulmigu Kondathukaliamman temple, Pariyur,

Erode District.

- Arulmigu Sugavaneswarar temple, Salem.
- Arulmigu Vanabathra Kaliyamman temple, Thekkampatti, Coimbatore District.
- Arulmigu Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple, Sholingar, Vellore District.
- Arulmigu Bagavathiamman temple, Kanniyakumari.
- Arulmigu Murugan Temple, Solaimalai Mandapam, Alagarkoil, Madurai.
- Arulmigu Nellaiyappar Gandhimathi temple, Tirunelveli.
- Arulmighu Thirumalai Kumaraswamy Temple, Panpozhi, Tirunelveli District.<sup>21</sup>

### Conclusion

Vijayanagara became the greatest empire of southern India over time. It aided the reconstruction of Hindu life and administration following the disturbances and disunities of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries by acting as a barrier against invasion by the Muslim sultanates of the north. During his reign, the Vijayanagar Empire reached its height of splendour. With the death of Krishnadeva Raya in 1529, the Vijayanagar Empire began to fall apart. Ramrai was defeated at Talikota by Adilshahi, Nizamshahi, Qutubshahi, and Baridshahi in 1565, bringing the reign to an end. The Tondaiman chief received his title of raja from the last of the Vijayanagara kings, a strange and ironic conferment. For this was a symbolic entitling of a 'little king', already master of a small realm, by the last of a line of kings that had dominated the southern peninsula for three centuries, but who was master of little more than titles to be exchanged for military services he desperately needed merely to stay alive. But more linked the beleaguered Sri Ranga III and the Tondaiman raja than an entitlement, which hardly created the rajadom of Pudukkottai. The more significant connections were of another sort which had to do with what had become essential about the Vijayanagara kingdoms from the fifteenth century on. The Vijayanagara epoch saw the transition of South Indian society from its medieval past to its modern future. During the time that the rayas were peninsular overlords and their capital the symbol of vast power and wealth, south Indian society was transformed in several important ways. Through most of the first dynasty, Vijayanagara kings were content to be conquerors whose digivajaya, or righteous conquests, of Tamil country left the ancient Cholas and Panyas in their sovereign places, except that they were

reduced by their homage to Vijayanagara. Until the early sixteenth century, the latter were ritual sovereigns everywhere outside their Deccan heartland; apart from occasional plundering forays, they were content with the homage of distant lords.

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