

# Concept and Features of North Indian and South Indian Temples with Special Reference to Temples in Kerala

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**Abstract-** The paper tries to analyse the similarities and differences which are generally seen in North Indian and South Indian temples. It was visible in iconographs, design and architecture of temples. The influence of Buddhism and Jainism in the construction temples are also discussed. The prevalence of Nagara and Versa architecture in the construction temples and its expansion to differed parts of India is also analysed. The expansion of the temple architecture of the Pallavas, Pandyas and Cholas to Kerala is another area of discussion in the paper. Kerala has great cultural legacy of temples and temple arts. Most of the temples are constructed either in Pallava or Pandya style of architecture. The Aryanisation in Kerala and the socio-economic changes happened here very much influenced the rise of temple culture in Kerala. In ancient and medieval period temple not only centre of worship but also great centres of learning. In the newly engaged social formation of Kerala after the decline of Second Chera Kingdom temple, particularly temple in Brahmin settlement played a crucial role in the power structure of Kerala. A close examination of the nature of the functioning of temples in Medieval and early modern Kerala reveals its deep influence in Bhakti and feudalism.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Temple is standing symbol of devotion to God. The concept of the temple was an extension of the concept of personal God. The temple was a Devalaya or a residence of a God. The deity stood or sat there on a pedestal ready to receive the prayers and gifts of the devotee, not unlike a kindly monarch on this throne who receive the humble tributes and petitions of his loyal subjects.

As a religious, institution and a place of worship, the temple in India has had a dim past. For ancient times various forms of nature worship idolatry and polytheistic beliefs have existed in India<sup>i</sup>. Belief in spirit pervading and manifesting themselves in the working of nature has been universal in Hinduism. For an idea of what the first temples were like, we must come down to Asoka, the fervent Buddhist emperor. In addition to rock-cult architecture and excavation into living rocks of *Chaityas* and *Viharas* of the Buddhist initiated by Asoka near Gaya was soon taken up in the traprock regions of the Deccan and western India, reproducing aspects of contemporary brick and timber originals which, because of the perishable nature of the fabric of their construction, did not survive the march of time<sup>ii</sup>.

This expression of forms of architecture and sculpture through the permanent medium of stone, adopted earlier by the Buddhists, then by the Hindus and the Jains, has enabled the

monuments to last for centuries and give us a fairly good idea what the contemporary religious architecture built *Stupas* and *Chaityas*, which are in essence temples, in the Eastern Andhra and northern Karnataka regions, too have survived because of the adoption of stone for their protective casing and sculptured veneer not to mention the stone railings which totally imitated timber work in their journey and fixtures. These *Stupas* and *Chaityas* show their own distinct regional characters as against their counterparts in North and North-Western India.

Buddhism almost went into complete eclipse soon. The Hindu temples to a greater extent and the Jain ones to a lesser extent predominating. There had been of course a natural heritage of ideas and usages among the three during their periods of development and growth in the region on a matrix that was essentially indigenous. More over an Indian temple is not necessarily a Hindu shrine. It can belong to any of the several religious denominations Buddhist, Hindu, Jain or Sikh<sup>iii</sup>. Barring Sikh temples where the only object of veneration is the sacred book-Guru Govindh Saheb all others are build to ever shine the images of Gods or Goddesses or saints.

From archaeological evidence it would be clear that the conception of tree-worship is very ancient, dating back to the Harappan times. There was a reference in early Buddhist texts to their existence even prior to the Buddha. In Buddhist literature such tree shrines, with or without a temple signature and not specifically Buddhist, are referred to as *rukhachitya* (Vriksha chaitya-vrikshas) or tree temples, while those around the Bodhi tree that had become sacred to the Buddhists are called *Bodhi gharas*.

The Bodhi ghara is always represented as a high gallery, open or roofed, immediately surrounding the *Bodhi* tree and the *Vajrasana* at its foot, with definitely posed entrances into the enclosed sacred area, the *Bodhi-Mandala*. The *Bodhi-ghara* structures around the principal object of worship would thus anticipate the cloister galleries (dalans) round the roofed temples structures or *Vimana*, often more than one stored enshrining the object of worship. The other type of hypothermal temple brought into vogue by the Buddhist was the *Stupa*, often called *Maha-Chaitya*. The Stupas on the East Coast, lying between Nagarjunakonda and Amaranata on one side and salihundam on the other, stupas like those at sankaram have the *ayuka* platforms on one of their sides.

Thus the Buddhist contributed a lot to the development of Indian culture and it can be visible in the cave at Sudama. It could be taken for a Buddhist *Chaitya* or one of the old saivaite sanctuaries of Kerala and could thus to be fare runner of the

apidal temple<sup>iv</sup>. After the Buddhist and the Mouryan phase the Guptas that contributed for the beginning of structural temples in stone masonry made their appearance.

The period of the imperial Guptas is described in most standard books on Indian History as one of the Hindu Renaissance. Religion was intimately connected with developments in architecture and the plastic arts. The doctrine of Bhakti and the growing importance of image worship led to the construction of the free standing temple with a sanctuary (garbhagriha). In which the central cult image was placed. Several temples with central shrines have survived from the Gupta period. It can be seen in the temple at Sanchi, Ladhkhan, Deogarh, Pigawa and Bhumara<sup>v</sup>.

The most ornate and beautifully composed example of Gupta temple building however is the fragmentary temple of Vishnu at Deogurh. It may be one of the earliest specimens of the five shrine (panchayatana) variety of temples which became common in subsequent times and which reflected the feudal hierarchization of the ever expanding Indian pantheon. But the development of free standing temples did not altogether displace cave temples.

Some of the caves at Ajanta May be assigned to the period of the Guptas, though perhaps the highest achievement of the early Indian cave architecture is seen in the Kailashanath temple at Ellora, belonging to the eighth century<sup>vi</sup>.

Gupta period saw the flourishing of the structural procedure. The ritualistic needs, connected with the worship of an image, are not quite suited to cave excavations. The proper enshrinement of an image requires a free standing temple, and this can be more easily put up but the structural method. For this purpose the employment of sized and dressed stone began in a large scale in the Gupta period. The Brahmanical temples of the Gupta period are usually small and unpretentious and represent an initial stage of development. The Gupta period constitutes an age of experiments in temple forms and types.

The flat roofed square temple with a shallow porch in front, the flat roofed square temple with a covered ambulatory surrounding the sanctum cella and preceded by a porch in front, sometimes with a secondary storage temple with a low and squat lower or *shikhara* above, the circular temple with shallow projection at the four cardinal faces. The other three groups of Gupta temples are however, supremely important as supplying the genesis of the medieval Indian temple styles. One of the most well known examples of the first group may be found in temple at Sanchi.

The location of Talakkavu in Wynad near the Mysore border, Alattur and Paruvasseri near the Kongu border, Chitral near Pandyan border would suggest that Jainism in Kerala was influenced by the centres across the political borders in Mysore, Kongu and Pandyadesa.<sup>vii</sup>

Other temples of this group are the Kankali Devi Temple at Tigawa in Jabalpur and Vishnu and Varaha temple at Eran in sugar, at Nalling in Madhyapradesh. The numerous sculptural and architectural remains found at Ggawera in Allahabad, Khoh (Nagod) etc from their style of Carlings as from the evidence of inscriptions, are known to have belonged to the period under study Cunningham and Coomaraswamy are inclined to think that Patani Devi Temple near vnchavara (Nagod) also belonged to this period. The temples at Nachna Kuthara Bhumara and Brigram have

covered ambulatory (for *Pradakshina*) and this style came to be known sandhara prasada.

The third group of Gupta temples is represented by the *shikara* or tower, capping the santum cella. In this respect it marked the beginning of movemental temple architecture in North Indian Shinkhara temple at pathari belong to the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD was the most important example for this type of architecture. The Lakshmana temple at sirpur (Rajpur) of the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD, represents one of the most beautiful monuments among the shinkara temples of the early period.

Another development of distinctive styles of which three are recognized in the Canonical Shilpa texts. They are the *Nagara*, the *Vesara* and the *Dravida*. The temple style prevalent in the region between the Himalayas and the Vindhya has been described as the *Nagara* in the available Shilpa texts. With reference to the *Nagara* the texts unanimously describe it as being quadrangular all over, from the base to the top (*top*). The octagonal and circular shapes, prescribed respectively from the *Dravida* and *Vesara* styles, are also considered as inadequate distinguishing marks.

It is thus in the North and in the South the square pyramid of the Hindu temple terminates in a circular object<sup>viii</sup>. In the North the amalaka surmounted by a cone supporting a vase destined to receive the celestial ambrosia and bearing the trident of Siva or the double triangle of Vishnu. For the Dravidian architect the roof, with the storied pavilions, is the holy Kailasa on which stand the homes of gods, and the named them accordingly Meru, Mandara or Kailasa. Even today, the 60 metre high sanctuary tower of Brihadeswara at Tanjore is known as the Meru of the south. The same can be said of all temple, both in the North and South, built before the 14<sup>th</sup> century, since their sanctuaries hall high roof preceded by a lower and all are present the same aspect. The daria cave of the sanctuary thus appears as the centre of divine radiance glowing out on the world, and the believer who makes ritual circuit ground the walls can thus contemplate the variety of divine manifestations before uniting them in a meditation on the central symbol. Finally in as much as temple is the universe in a likeness, its dark interior is occupied only by a single image or symbol of the informing spirit, while externally its walls were collared with representation of the Divine powers in all their manifested multiplicity<sup>ix</sup>.

In visiting the shrine one proceeds inwards from multiplicity to unity, just as in contemplation; and on returning again to the outer world, one seen that one has been surrounded by all the innumerable forms that the sole seer and Agent within assumes in his playful activity. And this distinction between the outer world and the inner shrine of an Indian temple into which one enters "so us to be born again from the dark womb". It was form the beginning of the temples in India, the whole cities turned into religious cities, comprised of vast sacred documents. The organized religious, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, did in their early stages of growth, spread into the southern peninsula across the Vindhyan barrier of mountains and forests because of their own vitality, in successive waves merging into the regions of the south which had variable cultures, social patterns, traditions and religious beliefs of their own not to speak of a language that could flower into its own literature, independently of every other factor. Asoka tried to spread the Buddhism through friendly relation with neighbours across the border whom he could spread his message

through his Southern administrators. Asoka's mission seem to have attained greater success in South India<sup>x</sup>. In Tamil countries of the south Ceylon as well as in Suvarnabhumi, the law of piety and through it is the culture of India had an abiding influence. The tradition of rock cut architecture and Evaluation into living rocks of Chaityas and Viharas of the Buddhist initiated by Asoka near Gaya was soon taken up in South. From the sixth and seventh centuries AD, the Hindus and Jains of the south too adopted the stone medium, and started excavating rock cut cave temples or caving out rock cut monolithic temple forms, and ultimately building them of stone. In south, the stone temple tradition was still surviving. Even the early Hindu and Jain temples came into being under the royal Patronage of the rulers of the three great empires of the South the Chalukyas, the Pallavas and the Pandyas<sup>xi</sup>. The spirit was soon caught up by the nobility the mercantile corporations and the agricultural trade, and artisan guilds that flourished during those times. The result was that chain of temples, great and small, studded every village and town of the south, which thus came to be known as the land of the temples. The temples were documented by their own expressive and detailed inscriptions.

The beginnings of the Hindu temple architecture in south India are best traced in the remains of the early Brihadratha temples of the Ikshvahas excavated at Nagarjuna Konda in 1959. Here the temple complexes are seen to comprise shrines with *ardha* and *Maha-Mandaraja* in one axial line, *prakara*, *gopura*, *stambha* etc, at this early date. One of the temples has *parivaralyas* subsidiary shrines, with square, octagonal and circular plans anticipating the later *Nagara*, *Dravida* and *Vesara* styles<sup>xii</sup>.

Durga temple at Ladhkhan was another experiment seeking to adapt the Buddhist *Chaitya* to Brahmanical temple. This temple, perhaps of the eighth century, is an apsidal structure with a flat roof and a *Sikhara* rises above the *garbhagriha* and a massive square columns with heavy brackets and this forms the *pradakshina* path. Temples from the Chola times became the very hub of the rural and urban life in all its aspects – religious, cultural, social, economic and educational and thus became the repository of all that was best in fabric architecture, sculpture and other arts. The Jains had by then established their sangas at Madurai and even earlier their creed of the Digambara persuasion had centered principally in Sravanbelola in Mysore with its affiliates and branches the Guchchahas relating to Andhra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Hinduism witnessed great revival under the Saiva saints (Nayanars) and the Vaishnava saints (Alvars). Sankara, the great philosopher and teacher, also reformed the popular Hindu creeds – the Shanmata and the model of the related worship. In this background the growth of temples and organized temple worship became a trustworthy phenomenon.

The heaviness of the stone work relieved by an increase in the amount and quality of the sculpture. The main shrine, distinct from the Mandapa, has a *pradakshina* path. The pillared mandapa has thick walls with perforated stone windows. The square *sikhara* rises in clearly defined glories each of considerable elevation. The sculptures include the representations of *Siva*, *Nagas* and *Nagins*, and scenes from the Ramayana.

The art and architecture of the post-mahendra period, are found in the sea port town of Mamallapuram at the mouth of the Palar river, 32 miles south of Madras<sup>xiii</sup>. The monuments at Mamallapuram can be grouped into cut-in-cave temples, cut-out

monolithic temples now called *rathas*, sculptures in the open air rocks and structural temples. The relief is a masterpiece of classic art in the breadth of its composition, the sincerity of impulsiveness which draws all creatures together around the beneficent waters and its deep fresh love of nature.

In South India the geographical isolation of Kerala from the rest of the Sub continent caused by the western ghats had never denied her the inheritance of a common cultural heritage from the neighboring regions. Her Society which was basically Dravidian was exposed to certain extent to Aryan influences. Though Jain, Buddhist and Brahmins coming from the Deccan, Mysore and Kalinga region. Through these immigrants the Aryan institutions and concept had also found their way to the Dravidian society of Kerala. One of the most imposing features in the landscape of early medieval South India was the temple, "the temple as an institution, was an Aryan gift to the South India and that the so-called Kerala school is responsible only for covering the product of the Dravidian tradition<sup>xiv</sup>. Temples in Kerala used to be called in earlier times as *Mukkalavottam*. Later they came to be called *ambalam* or *Kshetram* or some time *tali*. The Kerala temple has *Srikovil* as its main core. The architectural style of Kerala temples has an inherent simplicity which becomes very conspicuous when juxtaposed, *Nagara*, *Vesara* and *Dravida* temple styles. Influence of the natural environment upon the temple form has to be recognized along with the socio-historical developments. In its original form is closely bound to the earth; is subject to the needs of society; is faithful to a programme<sup>xv</sup>. It creates its great monuments neatly against a known sky and in a known climate upon a soil which flourishes particular material and no other. The environmental space which envelopes the architecture has a major role in the articulation of architectural form.

Unlike the other architectural traditions in the mainland the design of Kerala temples shows a close similarity with the domestic architecture of the region. It was in the style of *nalukettu* and *ettukettu* with four or eight wings, apartments or rooms, were built according to requirement, of the classical *vastuashastra*, the architect was treatise. This closeness of layout between the secular and religious architecture are not in fact uncommon when we consider other traditions all round the world<sup>xvi</sup>.

Inscriptional evidence of the ninth- tenth centuries, clearly inform the beginning of temple building in Kerala. The cave temples of seventh eighth centuries in Kerala have imbibed direct inspiration from Tamil country especially the Pandyas of Madurai. The Kerala temple tradition could, however, overcome all of its limitations by making use of indigenous raw materials like timber, bricks etc. which formed more versatile media, functionally as well as structurally. Kerala cave Temples, of which ten exist, are distributed accordingly in three groups. The Southernmost group consists of those at Tirunandikara, Vizhinjam, Tuvankand and Bhutapandi. The central group consists of the temple at Kaviyur, Kottakkal and Aruvi para. The northern group from those at Iruvillamcode, Trikkar and Bharatanapara.

All the cave temples with apsidal ground plan, some of the Kerala temples however, can easily be associated in their structural similarity, with the Buddhist *Chaitya* halls found elsewhere in the mainland<sup>xvii</sup>. The Parasurama temple at Tiruvallam, with an inscription of thirteenth century consists of a circular shrine combined with a rectangular mandapa. Another example of the *Dravida Vimana* of this phase is the

Kathirmandapam at Chalapuram<sup>xviii</sup>. In thirteen – fourteenth centuries, when the state underwent a political revival, rising out of which, a technical indigenization of its arts idioms was consciously adapted a way that it did not violate the earlier architectural tradition or the essential character and symbolism of the cult traditions of Kerala. And thus the developments which took place in the earlier periods has got further elaboration and enrichment. The temples from fourteenth century show more elaboration in the layout of such an evolved Kerala temple, the *Srikovil* forms the nucleus while the other component, like the open air *Pradakshina patha*, the *nalambalam*, the *vilakkumandapam*. In some temples, especially in South Kerala, there is another Pillared structure, the *Balikkal Mandapam* in front of the Valiyambalam providing the main entrance into the temple proper. In front of the *Balikkal Mandapam* in some cases we can see the *Koothambalam*, it used for the performance of visual arts also can be seen. The *Koothambalam* in the Haripad temple and the *Garudamanapam* at Srivallabha temple, Tiruvalla were most important architectural structures. The temple and its settlement itself became an important institution in the social life of Kerala. More over the temple expressed the architecture, sculpture and other skills of that time. But its sweep and range of activities went far beyond religion and art. It was pivot round with much of the social and cultural activities of the locality revolved. Thus the temple became the centre of cultural activities. The festivals were instituted with a view to making the Hindu religion more attractive to the common people. The development of temple arts was accompanied by the progress of sculpture and painting. This temple acted as one of the archaeological source material which reflected the Socioeconomic, political, religious and architectural skill of that society and its people. The temple proliferation brought about some changes in the religion of the people. Hinduism, which was more or higher philosophy of the few got popularized as it result. More social contracts were possible on the occasion of the numerous temple festivals which are described in inscriptions to been conducted on a grand scale<sup>xix</sup>. The festivals of the temples used to attract people from all over South India. This helped the popularization of Hinduism which was transformed into the active faith more sections of society and which evolved the participation of large number of tenants, sub-tenants, skilled artisans and other professional quantitative change in the character of the Hindu faith. The temple have played and important part in the religions, social and economic life of the people. The South Indian temple with their life and policy were essentially religious institution. They were also a powerful social and economic entity. The temple is historically more important as a social and economic entity than a religious institution. The temple was the centre of universal culture. The best architecture and sculpture and such painting as there was were lavished on it. Fine arts like music, dancing and jewel marking flourished in the temples and primarily on their account.

In Kerala, the arts associated with the temple. Arts can be defined as an expression of anything's with skill or in a well disciplines form. It may either be in the form of music, instruments, performing arts or any other form. The origin of music can be traced to the primitive days when man imitated by raising his sounds similar to bird-calls, animals noises etc. the arts associated with the temple are music in form of Soupana-Sangeetha, Musical instruments, ritualistic arts like Theyyam,

Thira etc, Performing arts like Koothu, Krishnanatam, Thullal, Kathakali etc.

Temples were developing as the ideological canthers of the agrarian settlements under the control of Brahmins. The information on Koothu and Koodiyattom shows that they were in vogue in all major temples from ninth century. The performance of Koothu was in Koothambalam specially constructed for the purpose in the temple premises. The Koothambalam in the Vadakkumnatha temple and Trisur and Irinjalakkuda. Koothu is being conducted to this. The Kerala temples are not only unique in its structural aspects but also a treasure house of carvings and mural paintings. The wood carvings in Kerala temples has a unique style. Its impact is seen in the various components parts of the temple viz, sreekovil, namaskaramandapa, koothambalam, balikkal mandapas etc. Stone carvings were also visible on the temple walls though the construction of temples is datable in 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. In Kerala generally the temples are built with stone wall and superstructure are made of literate and studio, timber and tile<sup>xx</sup>.

The beginning of the mural painting in Kerala is still in obscurity and it is unknown when these paintings found a place in temples of Kerala. The techniques of mural paintings have been broadly described in vishudharmother 7<sup>th</sup> century, Abhilasha Chintahamani (12<sup>th</sup> century). The walls of the temples in Kerala which are made of laterite stones, granite stones etc have cavities and uneven surface. The mural paintings generally give larger life size characters and they generally depict scenes from epics and Puranans, particularly Ramayana and Mahabharatha. The colors generally used are red ocher, Yellow ocher, Green etc. there is no doubt that these paintings depict perfect craftsmanship and significance. Generally the talents of artists are executed in these mural paintings. As the themes of these paintings in Kerala are based on Puranic legends they evoke Bhakti besides being master piece of art. Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple at Thiruvananthapuram, Sree Bhagavathi temple at Puliyarakkavu at Chirayinkeezhu, Sree Krishna Swamy Temple at Neyyettinkara, Sree Lokanarkavu at Vatakkara in Kozhikode district etc have mural paintings<sup>xxi</sup>. The carvings and mural paintings, the temples given an insight into the great cultural heritage of Kerala. The great artists who made these carvings and paintings have given us great legacy and it become an inspiration for the development of modern paintings. The art of carvings and paintings shows decline from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to various reasons such an exorbitant cost of wood, non availability of dedicated artisans and absence of lovers of wood sculpture. The changes of political situation and lack of rulers, having aesthetic sense have resulted in the retrogression of masterpieces of wood sculpture, particularly in temples. The temple, which began as a centre of worship and as the nucleus of the Brahmin colony, began to grow in space and in the range of economic, social and even political activities with this it was able to influence to a very great extend, the pattern of economic, social, religious and political evolution in Kerala.

Several temples contained libraries and were centers of religion and secular learning. Education was promoted through the organization of *Salai*. Even public utility services like hospitals and banking were attended to by the temple. The drama closely allied to the dance, was promoted by some temples. This is relevant in the case of Kerala dance forms. In the famous book

Chilappathikaram written by Ilango Adikal, a prince of Chera kingdom of which the present Kerala was a part mention is made of this area. Mention is also made of the institution of devadasies assigned for various chosen duties connected with the temples<sup>xxii</sup>. With the success of the Bhakti movement in South India it is presumed that these dancers, through their right to perform dance offerings in the temples. There are evidences to show the existence of a powerful group of devadasis in almost all the important temples of South. There are many factors ethnic, social and religion that shaped ancient Indian education. Temples had played a greater role as educational centers, religion was one of the main factor for this temple centered education in South India, in ancient and medieval times was basically religious in character.

In ancient times, religion and education were indistinguishable and almost all the branches of education sprang from the religious rituals and sacrifices. The priests who were the authorities of the hymnal knowledge and religious rituals laid the foundation of the ancient Hindu education by way of imparting it to their kith and kin.

The temples of Hindu, Buddhist and Jaina creeds and allied institutions also played a prominent role in promoting education. Numerous inscriptions and literary evidence give as glimpses into the types of educational services rendered by the temple.

The institutions mainly concerned with the development of education in ancient and medieval period besides the Hindu temples are the ghatika, matha, agrahara, guhai, salai and Buddhist and Jaina monasteries while the temple was a symbolic expression of the religious feeling, of the people, these educational institutions stood for the propagation of the religious ideas and philosophy. These institutions played a prominent role in fostering the religious and cultural life of the people. Salai were mainly concerned with the religion and temple rituals, thus showing its close affinity to the temple. Temples acted as a repository of fine arts also Art and religion are inseparable and in fact sustain each other. Art in India was essentially channelized for religious purposes for a long time. The arts like music, dance and dramatics served as the best suited mode of worship to the people, right from the day of the initiation of religion or cult. With the advent of the Bhakti movement music and dance became part and parcel of worship. Those spontaneous outpourings of devotional hearts, the song of the Saiva Nayanars and Vaishna Alvars in praise of God are filled with music. Thus with the religious approval and sanction, the fine arts thrived well under the patronage of the temple and temple itself became the repository of fine arts.

The word salai is referred to the most of the inscriptions as a feeding house wither attached to a temple or as an independent one. It is also taken to mean as a "residential hall of learning". There are inscriptions which refer to this as an institution not merely for feeding activities, but also as a centre of learning. The tax free land given for the upkeep of the Salai was known as *salabhoga* in inscriptions. There were many of these institutions in early times in the southern part of Tamil Nadu and also in Kerala. The Salai at Parthivasekharapuram, and the celebrated Kandllur Salai are well known. Like ghatika and matha the salai was also an educational institution attached to the temple. This is evidenced by the copper plate grant of parthivasekharapuram and also founded a Salai very near to it. This Salai in all probability was associated with the temple. The temples of South India also witnessed the development of a peculiar system known as the

Devadasi system alleged to the temple especially in Kerala. The devadasis formed a unique class of employees in the temples of South India and were dedicated to the service of the Devatha or deity of the temple. In literary manner the servant of the maids of Gods.

The origin of the Devadasi system in South India may be dated to period not later than the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. The first known mention of the Devadasis is found in an inscription in the Chokkar Temple of Malabar. It is only in the K.E. 215 (AD 1040) that Devadasis are mentioned in Thiruvananthapuram. The interventional evidence prove that the crises of temples and the Bhaktimovement started by the Alvars and Nayanars in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD led to the crises of the institution of Devadasi system in Kerala in order to attract the people to the temple and taken to awaken their love of art. There are seven classes of Devadasis. They were (1) Datta or one given herself as gift to a temple (2) Vikrita, one who sells herself for the same purpose (3) Bhritiya, one who offers herself as a temple servant for the prosperity of her family (4) Bhakta, one who joins a temple out of devotion (5) Horuta, one who is enticed away and presented to a temple (6) Alankara, one who being well trained in professional and profusely decked is presented to a temple by nobles and kings (7) Rudra Ganika or Gopika who receives regular wages from a temple and employed to sing and dance. This system gained popularity during the time of the Cholas. Kings had taken special interest in the appointment of Devadasi in the temples.

The oldest rock edicts referring to them in Kerala is that of Chokkoor temple in Ponnani taluk which is believed to be of 932 AD. Evidences are also there at the temples of Nedumpram Tali, Tiruvalla 11<sup>th</sup> century and Kandiyoor. Sculptures showing the dance forms prevalent in those days are seen in the temples of Thirukkulekharapuram, Thiruvikramangalam, Kidangoor, Ettumanoor, Thrikkodithanam and Thirunavaya.

In course of time, the prosperous temple which was landed magnate from the beginnings also developed into a store house of gold and silver and precious jewels as well as regular place of assembly for the rural elite<sup>xxiii</sup>. This produced the need for exclusiveness and protection leading eventually to the development of the temple to the fortress like proportions with several circles of streets with in streets Bazars and armed forces. The inscriptions of the Kulasekhara age give us information about the arrangements that had been made for the management of the temples. A committee called the Sapha was constituted for a fixed period to look after the affairs of the temple. Its members were mostly Brahmins they were known as sapha Aryar. The overall authority in regard to the management of temples was vested in the hands of Koyiladikarikal appointed by the emperor. Muzhikkulam Kacham which laid down strict rules and regulations for the temple properties, and funds by the Uralar (*trustees*) as well as neglect of duties by the Karalar (*tenants*).

The Muzhikkulam Kacham is referred to in the inscriptions of the age discovered all over Kerala from Tirunelli to Thirunandikkara in Kanyakumari districts. Some of the other Kachams of the period, was Kadamkattu Kacham, Tavanur Kacham and Sankaramangalam Kacham which laid down rules governing landlord tenant relations in regard to temple properties. The schools attached to the temple were the mainspring of religious life. The records of the religious movements in which the

South Indian rulers took an active part and have been carefully preserved in both Sanskrit and vernacular literatures.

In brief the great temples of South India were public institutions representing the collective energy of the state rather than monuments for the king's personal glorification they had civic as well as religious uses, they fulfilled the purposes of the town hall, college and technical school. The people met in the temple porch as to elect representatives from local bodies, to listen to sacred music recitations or plays. The school attached to the temples were the repositories of the philosophical thought which were the main spring of the religious life. The records of the religious movements in which the South Indian rulers took an active part have been carefully preserved in both Sanskrit and vernacular literature. Then the rulers built temples tell nothing of their lives except brief summaries of conquests which made so little impression on the popular memory that whole dynasties were

forgotten although their temples are still in daily use. Kerala temples which are monuments of legacy and ancient culture and take earnest effort to preserve them. In temples one can see two types of activities the spiritualistic and non-spiritualistic. The non-obligation items often seen such as maintenance of colleges, Kalyanamandapa etc. Temple patronized music, dance and other fine arts. The temples also became great centers in fostering and encouraging fine arts like music, dance, drama, sculptures, painting and other kind of art

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