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வந்தலாறு

**TEMPLE LAND AND ADMINISTRATION IN TAMIL NADU
(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THANJAVUR DISTRICT)**

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Abstract

By 7th Century AD., Substantial temples in stone came to be constructed in South India.

The earliest well known Hindu temples in South India are those of Mamallapuram in Chenglepet District. The gradual development of temples in the Southern part of India can be traced during the last thirteen or fourteen centuries. At the end of the 6th Century A.D, an urge for rock-cut temples had spread everywhere over the Pallava Kingdom of Kanchi. The earlier Pallava cave temples were excavated during the reign of Mahendravarman Pallava

(600-630 A.D). Several cave temples are attributed to this period during the reign of his successor, the great Narsimhavarman Mhamalla (630-668 A.D.), more elaborate cave temples were built. In the next stage of temple development, during the days of the Pallavas, structural temples built of stones and with lofty towers rising in tiers over the main shrine (e.g. Kailasanathaswarn; temple at Kancheepuram), became popular. During the Chalukya period a large number of Jain and Hindu sculptures and temples were erected. The period of Pallava temples ended with the final conquest of the Pallava kingdom by the rising dynasty of the Cholas of Tanjore about in 900 A.D. The Chola period was notable for the large number of new types of temples. The tradition set up by the Cholas was continued and greatly embellished by Vijayanagar Kings. In the Deccan, the Vijayanagar emperors, the greatest of whom was Krishnadeave Raya, were great builders of temples and patrons of religion, arts and literature; but the defeat of the Vijayanagar King at the battle of Talikota in 1565 A.D by the Bahmani Sultans brought about an eclipse of the Hindu recovered. Nevertheless, a great deal of temple construction took place at the instance of tribal chieftains like the Nayak of Madurai and Thanjavur and the titular kings of the South.

Key words: temple, lands, peseants, grants, benamiholders

Introduction

The temples of South India have been preserved in more or less the same state in which they were originally constructed e.g. the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram, the Brahadeeswara temple in Tanjore, the Meenakshi temple in Madurai and the great temple of Rameswaram as well as the temple at Srirangam and Kanchipuram.¹

According to Hindu tenets, Charity is part and parcel of religion. From the very early times, religious and charitable institutions in the country came under the special protection of the ruling authority and Hindu Kings regarded themselves as specially charged with the duty of properly administering the funds of temples within their jurisdiction and the application of such funds towards the objects for which the temples were founded.

The Hindu rulers accepted the right to visit endowments of this kind to prevent and redress abuses in their management. Mr. P.R. Ganapathi Iyer in his learned treatise on 'Hindu

and Mohomedan Endowments' has referred to several historical inscriptions which bear testimony to the fact that Hindu Kings exercised supervision over temples and endowments.²

FUNCTIONS OF TEMPLES:

The temples organized festivals and patronized the arts. Temple music and dancing and

temple sculpture are the traditional art forms of South India. They also patronized learning.

Many of the larger temples ran traditional Vedantic and Siddhantic schools and financed secular and scientific education, The temples fed the poor and gave grants to charitable institutions. Temples were arbiters of social status in the locality.

"The right to participate in certain ceremonies and the order of precedence in certain rites and festivals were important visible expressions of the accepted hierarchy of communities and individuals in the locality. Temples were both makers and breakers of status."³

The temple also had important economic functions. It provided employment to priests who performed rituals, administrators who managed its lands and income, craftsmen who maintained its structures, and others who indirectly derived employment from the activities of

worship of devotees. The temples engaged persons and institutions on contracts to repair the

idols and buildings, and meet the requirements for festivals and ceremonies.

Some temples built shops and market on their premises as well.

ORIGIN OF MUTTS:

Buddhist monks wandering from place to place established monastic institutions called

'Sanghas' (later known as mutts) and Sangharamas.⁴ They gathered disciples around them, and imparted instruction in the religious tenants of the order to which they belonged. The

disciples renounced their connection with family and the family wealth and went voluntarily

to a spiritual teacher. They confined themselves to theological studies and the imparting of

religious instructions to other disciples. Gradually, pious persons constructed buildings for

the residence of the Buddhist ascetics.

Rameswami Aiyer observes that Buddha himself accepted Jeravana and Rajvihasa as endowments made for Buddhist monks. From the days of the Buddhist monasteries, their properties were declared as non-transferable and indivisible and the idea has persisted ever since with regard to the mutts which were founded on the pattern of such monasteries. Buddhism flourished in India upto the 7th Century A D with the advent of the Gupta dynasty, there was a revival of Hinduism and this led to rivalry between Buddhism and Hinduism. By the end of the 7th Century A. D.. the influence of Buddhism in the country had vanished.

It was Adi Sankaracharya (8th Century A. D) who first began to establish Hindu mutts as we know them today. He propounded the theory of absolute monism i.e. the Advaita non-dualistic school of philosophy, combated the doctrine of Buddhism and Jainism and re-established the religion of the Vedas and the Upanishads. He inaugurated mutts in four corners of India namely Sringeri, Badrinath, Jagannath and Dwaraga (respectively located in present day States of Tamil Nadu, Himalaya, Orissa and Gujarat).

The mutts or monasteries which were founded by Sankara were modeled on the Buddhist Viharas or Sangharamas and many of the rules of his monastic order were from the 'Vinayapitaka' * In Northern India, the followers of Sankara are called 'Dasnamis' and there are numerous Dasnami mutts.

Following the lead of Sankara, there were others who founded schools of philosophy and established mutts for propagating the same. Sri Ramanuiacharya established the Visishtadwaita of philosophy of qualified dualism which is devoted to the worship of Vishnu. He established several hundred mutts, of which only a few remain in existence now.

Madhuvacharya founded the Dwaita system or the dualistic school of philosophy. He established eight mutts.

There were other Vaishnava sects founded by Ramanada, Nimbarka, Villachacharya and Chaitanya Nahaprabhu. The Goswamis who are found largely in Western India and also in some parts of Northern India and the Madras State also have their mutts.⁵

MUTTS IN TAMIL NADU:

In this early 20th century, one of the largest mutts was the saivite * mutt at Tiruvavaduthurai near in this early 20th century Mayiladuthurai in Thanjavur District It has large endowments in the districts of Tirunelveli (25,000 acres), Madura' (1000 acres) and Thanjavur (3000 acres).⁶

The Thiruvavaduthurai mutt at present controls 130 subordinate mutts. Another saivite mutt near Dharmapuram owns 2500 acres In Thanjavur district and another 12,500 acres elsewhere It controls twenty-seven temples⁷, The vaishnavite mutt at Nanguneri Tirunelveli district gets an annual income of Rs 60,000 from its lands and Rs. 6000 from its properties in Tirunelveli town It also owns a coffee estate and had he f accumulated new properties worth two and a quarter lakh rupees in first quarter of the 20th century It is supervising two hundred subordinate mutts, many of which also own properties.⁸

NON-BRAHMIN MUTTS:

The non-Brahmin ascetics of South India with a desire to disseminate religious knowledge and promote religious charity established mutts in districts of Thanjavur, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai and Tirunelveli.

Most of these mutts like the Dharmapuram mutt, the Thiruvavaduthurai mutt, the Tirupanandal mutt and the Tiruvannamalai Kunrakudi Adhinam were devoted to the inculcation and spread of the Sava Siddhartha system of philosophy.

In addition to the mutts commonly known as such, there are various Ashrams scattered throughout the country.

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF TEMPLES BY HR & CE:

In 1817, the Control of Public Endowments was entrusted to the Board of Revenue. It was opposed by Hindus. After 1839, the supervision by the Government was withdrawn.¹⁰ In 1841, the Provincial government instructed the Board of Revenue to allow the individuals to manage the affairs and funds of the temples.

There was no supervision during the period from 1842 to 1863 over the management of Hindu temples, through the regulation Act of 1817. This resulted in maladministration and misappropriation of temple funds. To rectify this, Act XX of 1863, came into force. Provision was made for changing over the properties to Trustees or committee of management. This Act does not specify the term and conditions of the trustees. So, after 1863, these trustees became hereditary. To plug the loopholes in the Act of 1863, a committee was appointed under the presidentship of Sir William Robinson to make a fresh Bill. Another committee was appointed in 1884 under Mr. Sullivan. Again in 1884 under Mr. Sullivan". Again in 1894, a committee under Mr_ Muthuswamy was appointed. In 1898 Chenstsal Rao's Committee was appointed to revise the Bill. The Suggestions given by all these committees were not accepted by the government. In 1919, a Reform Act was passed and it was assented further as Act of 1925.

According to this Act of 1925, A Statutory Board called "The Hindu Religious Endowments Board" was created with four commissioners and a president. The Board was vested with the power of controlling and supervising the temples.

The validity of the Act of 1925 was challenged by Mutts and Trustees. The Tamil Nadu Religious Endowments Act of 1926 was passed validating and re-enacting the provision of the Act I of 1925. This Act brought all the temples under the control of Hindu Religious Endowments. The temple committees were assigned the power of exercising supervision over the temples which do not have hereditary trustees. Amendments from 1928 to 1947 were made to the primary Act II of 1927. Of these Amendments, the Act No. V 1944 abolished the temple committees. Assistant Commissioners were appointed in their places_ The Act No. X of 1946 made provision for the government to audit the accounts of the temples. The Act No. V of 1947 made the provision of "Free entry" to all the members of the Hindu Community.

After the Independence of India, the government of Madras enacted the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act of 1951. Provision for supe.-Asion and auditing of temple funds were made by the Act. The temple Trustees and Mutts challenged the validity of the Act of 1951. During the years 1954. 1956 and 1959, further modifications were made. The recent modification of the Act was effected on 15th June 1971. During the year 1972, the Department had been administering under its control 157 mutts, 12, 038 temples and 832 specific endowments totalling 13,027 religious institutions with an estimated income of Rs.

6.75 crores. In 1973, 2162 institutions were additionally brought under the control of the department.

The revenue for the maintenance of the department is derived from the contributions and audit fees payable under section'92 of the Act by the religious institutions_ In '1973 the total Strength increased to more than 15,000 institutions and at present it has gone upto not less than 35,000 institutions. The administrative set up of HR CE is given in the diagram – 4.1 Presler quotes one Commissioner as saying:

"We are dealing with faults coming from time immemorial. The problems are manifold, and they go to the very root of the administration of the temples, because without lands, or without trustees, nothing can happen to the temples... The main problems are only these: the properties of the temples, and the persons in charge of the properties."104"

Finally, the State has an independent stake in land. This constitutes the HR CE's major challenge. Land administration is one of the hallmarks of modern India, it was pivotal in building the colonial state, and has been a major aspect of state policy Independence Land administration serves many functions, including provision of a steady revenue to the government; stimulation agricultural productivity regulation of social relations, especially among tenants, landlords, money lenders and labourers; and monitoring of the rural political climate.

The state's land policies have historically been implemented by revenue authorities, especially by the Board of Revenue and local revenue officers, the collectors.

CONTROL OF TEMPLE LANDS:

The management and control of the temple lands by the HR & CE pose several problems in Tamil Nadu. The HR & CE agrees in a general way that the way in which temple land is used should not be contrary to public policy, especially land reforms. But it is reluctant to go to the full extent of having temple land handled as though it were simply a public resource Land, after all, is the historical foundation of temples as institutions, It poses a distinct set of problems, and needs special treatment by State authorities.

The disposition of temple land is crucial. The manner of tackling the land ownership of temples in the light of agrarian reforms determines the future of temples, mutts and trusts in Tamil Nadu.

Pressler examines the struggle between the HR & CE and the powerful Board of Revenue during the period from 1925 to 1950. This highlights the problem of controlling the temple land in Tamil Nadu.¹¹

HINDU RELIGIOUS AND CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS AND BOARD OF REVENUE:

The conflict between the HR CE and the Board of Revenue arises when the former tries to protect the temple's interest, and the latter tries to preserve the state's interest when the temples began to lose lands, the HRE was established.¹²

The problem of Controlling temple lands- had been observed by Presler thus “The problem was especially severe with land fill inam tenure. Inam tenure 15 complicated and controversial,.. Basically mains originated as tax .free grants by kings and other rulers of a parcel of land or a portion of the land's produce Inam grants were given for many reasons, eg., to reward loyal service, to solidify political support. to endow charities, to show piety, Many inams were granted for the support of temples or of those performing rituals and other services in temples.”

Further "Any land or income from land, associated either with a temple, or with a temple servant, is owned by the temple, and is owned permanently. Temple land like the temple itself, is public, without private rights attached to it, and because of this is different from ordinary inam land, and should be administered through a distinct set of rules and regulations, and by a distinct agency, the HRE Board. ¹³"

But the understanding of the Board of Revenue about the meaning of Inam tenure held by the temples is different from that of HR & CE Board.

- I. The Board of Revenue's observations were as follows:
- II. inams were originated as grants from local rulers in order to support temples; inams were not, however, permanent grants;
- III. inams were valid till the obligations for which they were granted were executed.
- IV. Religious inams are of two types, i.e.
 - (a) those granted in the name of the main deity of the temple itself. and
 - (b) those in the name of individuals, e.g the priest. Sol the conditions attached with these inarns were of different nature.

Getting Rich with Temple Lands:

Several Temple landlords, having over 1,000 acres of wet land in the Cauvery basin with three crops a year, are without adequate funds for their maintenance. There are over 50 such 'landlords', mostly in Thanjavur and Nagapattinam districts, who have been languishing while their benami rich landlord 'tenants' have struck it rich over a span of seven decades.

According to HR & CE Department sources, the arrears to the temples from the lands and building have run to Rs. 81.29 crores as on March 31, 1994. As against the demand of Rs. 89/8 crores, the Department was able to collect only a meagre amount of Rs. 8.49 crores, during the fasli Year 1402 (1992-93) ¹⁴.

The arrears from the wet lands alone are as high as Rs. 68.79 crores as against the demand of Rs. 72.31 crores. The rest of the arrears are from dry lands, buildings sites and miscellaneous sources. Temples in Thanjavur and Qua id-e-Milleth districts top the arrears list are unable to pay the rent, the Government has waived the rent on many.

Since the poor tenants are unable to pay the rent, the Government has waived the rent on many occasions. But the landlord-cum-benami temple tenants are not willing to pay the rent to the temples even though there is a bumper harvest.

Mostly the lands are in the hands of politically influential tenants who use their clout whenever any action is mooted against them. There are cases where the tenants are locally powerful, against whom officials cannot even think of taking any action. Besides, the existing laws are favourable to the tenants, only making it difficult for the Department to take legal action against them. In some cases the temple administrations do not know against whom they should proceed as the tenants have changed over a period of years.

As an illustration of poor rent collection from tenants, one can consider the case of the Vedaranyeswarar temple at Vedaranyam in Nagapattinam district which has the unique distinction of having the maximum landed property among the temples in the State. It has 1,822.46 acres of wet land, 4110 16 acres of dry land, and 479072 acres of rained land, spread over 45 villages¹⁵. In addition to this, the temple has many buildings and sites. The rent fixed by the authorities for this temple for 1993 is 8,000 bags of paddy per annum or its equivalent in cash, for its wet lands, Rs. 24,228 from dry lands, Rs. 23,695 from rain-fed lands, Rs 20813 from buildings and Rs. 4785 from the sites But during the year 1992 to 1993 it received only 2,500 bags of paddy from wet lands; Rs. 9,430 from dry lands, Rs. 12,527

from rain-fed areas, Rs 13, 516 from buildings and Rs. 1374 from the sites. Though the collection is one third of the demand, it helps the temple to perform regular pujas but the total arrears from the tenants would run to several lakhs of rupees.¹⁶

The efforts of the Tamil Nadu Government to collect the arrears due to the various temples in different parts of the State have not been rewarding, Out of the total arrears of nearly Rs 70 crores, only a little over Rs. 10 crores have been collected in the latter part of last year (the grand total rent arrears comes around to not less than Rs. 70 crores).

The Importance of Temples, Mutts and Trusts:

Kings and chieftains of ancient Tamil region had endowed thousands of acres of lands to temples and mutts. According to Ganapathia Rita' Commission Report¹¹² submitted in 1969. nearly 2,00,000 acres of temple lands in Thanjavur alone are reported to be under illegal occupation of benami holders (fake names Most of the temple Lands are concentrated in the districts of Thanjavur and Tiruneiveli But Thanjavur district is the most important one in the whole of Tamil Nadu. Large tracts of rich and fertile soils in the Thanjavur district are owned by the temples, mutts, trusts and landlords.

It is the General estimate that about 5 lakh acres are under the control of landlords in - Thaniavur District, out of a total cultivated areas of about 15 lakh acres. Neither the Government records nor the HR & CE Board give any reliable figures about the total land controlled by temples.¹⁷

New Acquisition of Temple Lands:

Special staff were appointed to investigate the number of institutions and their properties to bring them under the control of HR & CE in the year 1971.

According to the report of the additional staff of inspection work on religious institution (1971), it was found that the number of institutions which were found not under the control of the department as a result of investigation were 40,247 with 1,98,920 53 acres of land The details of the reports submitted by the special staff are given in the table 4.2.

Special staff submitted reports relating to 33,703 86 acres of urban lands and 2218 buildings that belong to religious institutions which are in receipt of a low rental income. They have also reported on the profitable utilization of 6,694 acres of temple lands which are lying waste

TABLE 4.3(a)

DISTRIBUTION OF TEMPLES UNDER THE CONTROL OF HR&CE MADRAS-34

(Jurisdiction by size of annual)

S. No	Asst. Commissioners Offices	Income below Rs. 2,000(per annum)		Above Rs.2000 but below Rs.10,000		Above Rs.10,000 but below Rs.1 lakh		Above Rs.lakh		Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
1.	1. Madras	658	2.44	254	4.44	247	11.11	62	14.25	1,221
2.	2. Kanchipuram	1,151	4.28	306	5.34	113	5.08	25	5.75	1,596
3.	3. Tiruchi	3,102	11.52	564	9.85	186	8.36	29	6.67	3,881
4.	4. Pudukottai	1,593	5.92	193	3.37	61	2.74	7	1.60	1,854
5.	5. Thanjavur	1,066	3.96	443	7.74	139	6.25	20	4.60	1,668
6.	6. Nagapattinam	1,477	5.49	346	6.04	141	6.34	31	7.13	1,995
7.	7. Kumbakonam	1,724	6.41	325	5.67	140	6.29	31	7.13	2,220
8.	8. Cuddalore	2,015	7.49	646	11.28	176	7.91	15	3.45	2,852
9.	9. Madurai	2,604	9.68	388	6.77	116	5.22	23	5.29	3,131
10.	10.Ramanathapuram	1,405	5.22	226	3.95	115	5.17	35	8.05	1,781
11.	11. Tirunelveli	2,334	8.67	367	6.41	166	7.46	39	8.97	2,906
12.	12. Nagarkoil	532	1.98	123	2.15	38	1.71	3	0.69	696
13.	13. Coimbatore	1,529	5.68	246	4.30	155	6.97	40	9.20	1,970
14.	14_ Salem	1,667	6.19	365	6.37	112	5.04	27	6.20	2,171
15.	15. Erode	1,043	3.88	346	6.04	136	6.12	31	7.13	1,556
16.	16. Dharmapuri	1,688	6.77	259	4.52	135	1.57	3	0.69	1,985
17.	17. Vellore	1,325	4.92	330	5.76	148	6.65	14	3.20	1,817
	Total	26,913	100.00	5,727	100.00	2,224	100.00	435	100.00	35,299
		(76.24)		(16_22)		(6.31)		(1.23)		

Note: figures in parentheses are percentage to the total at the bottom of column 11 i.e 35,299

Source: office of the commissioner, HR & CE, Madras-34

These temples were not depending on their landed properties as their income from other sources were comparatively higher. But the remaining temples with an income of less than Rs. 1 lakh were depending on the Board for their maintenance and other works. But all these temples had vast properties. The total value of jewels held by the temples as estimated by the UNESCO is roughly to the tune of Rs. 10,000 Crores. If the rent and other income to the temples were collected periodically, most of them would have surplus funds.

Temple and Mutt Lands:

The particulars about the land and buildings belonging to temples and mutts in Tamil Nadu, are presented in the table 4.4 and 4.5.

There are 56 mutts under the control of HR & CE, Madras. However, these mutts are practically managed and administered by hereditary trustees namely madathipathis. The HR & CE Department is empowered only to audit the temples and mutts accounts which are controlled by the hereditary trustees. The number of trusts belonging to the mutts accounts for 17 and the number of temples belonging to the mutts are 58.

It can be seen from Table 4.4 that the undivided Thanjavur district accounts for nearly 44% of all temple tenants in the State. Kumbakonam division alone accounts for 60% of wet lands of all mutts in the state as per official records. This official Estimates of mutt lands are gross underestimates. Eight big mutts alone are reported to hold lands to the tune of 2.5 lakh acres, and three of the biggest among them - Dharmapuram, Thiruvaduthurai and Tiruppanandal mutts - are together reported to have around 1.2 lakh acres. All three are located in Thanjavur district. Clearly, Thanjavur occupies a preeminent position in terms of concentration of temple and mutt lands.

Temples and Mutts in Thanjavur District:

Compared with West Thanjavur district, East Thanjavur district has more concentration of temples and mutts lands. Some of the most important temples owning large area lands in the East Thanjavur district is given as follows:

The total area of temple lands both in the West and East Thanjavur district is given in tables - 4.6 (a) and 4.6 (b) The number of institutions belonging to temples in various God's

names, coming under the control of HR & CE Department, Mutts and Private individuals are given in the table 4.7.

TABLE 4.4

**THE PARTICULARS ABOUT THE LAND AND BUILDINGS BELONGING TO
TEMPLES AND MUTTS IN TAMIL NADU(1987)**

Asst. Commissioners Offices	Buildings	Tenants of the buildings	Tenants of the House Sites	Tenants of the Temple	Mutts	Nanjai Acre Cent	Punjai Acre Cent	Urban Lands Acre	Buildings
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Madras	2,137	3,936	9,578	2,322	1	2.67	-	19.98	4
Kanchipuram	843	990	3,929	5,764	12	3.858.04	706.60		
Tiruchirapalii	1,586	1,408	3,748	14,765	2	19.60	0.26	-	47
Pudukottai	318	365	12,104	6,259	1	68.96	162.17	-	-
Thanjavur	1,129	1,304	4,778	7,947	-	-	-	-	-
Nagapattinam	1,824	931	11,633	16,088	-	-	-	-	-
Kumbakonam	977	1,952	26,730	19,784	10	12,765.24	20,310.53	-	211
Cuddalore	986	897	3,164	7,714	6	630.87	863.45	-	45
Madurai	1,166	2,286	931	3,116	1	143.90	1,259.88	-	85
Ramanathapuram	2,693	2,685	3,276	5,793	4	835.98	924.04	-	32
Tirunelveli	1,134	2,045	987	6,585	6	2,709.18	10,950.14	-	155
Nagarkoil	135	97	75	682	3	161.73	33.82	-	5
Coimbatore	1,377	1,017	418	759	5	16.32	213.82	-	-
Erode	585	548	584	1,463	1	40.50	566.02	-	-
Salem	1,068	747	360	898	1	-	7.38	-	-
Dharmapuri	315	205	362	2,339	-	-	-	-	-
Vellore 1,317	1,216	1,563	4,129	3	29.06	41.22	-	-	-
Total	20,590	22,629	84,220	1,06,507	56	21,282.05	36,039.33	19.98	593
Acre -Cent			Acre-Cent			Ground Sq.ft			

Temple Lands:			Mutt Lands:				
Wet Lands	1,86,942.51	43.06	Wet Lands	21,282.05	37.13	Temple Urban Lands	22,232
Dry Lands	2,28,391.55	52.61	Dry Lands	36,039.33	62.87	Mutt Urban Lands	360
Rain-fed lands	18,761.90	04.33					
Total:	4,34.0	100.00	Total:	57,321.38	100.00	Total:	22,592
	95.96						

Source: Commissioner Office, HR 8' CE (Administration Section). Madras. -34

TABLE 4.5

TEMPLES WITH AND WITHOUT LANDS

S. No	Asst. Commissioners Offices	Total Temples	Listed Institutions	Temples with Lands	Temple with out lands	Wet (Acre-Cent)	Dry (Acre-Cent)	Rain (Acre-Cent)	Urban Lands (in Sq.ft.)
1.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
2.	Madras	1,196	234	1,103	93	2,849.31	1,326.47	167.99	10,901.0087
3.	Kanchipuram	1,593	113	1,552	41	8,546.02	8,165.81	269.49	
4.	Tiruchirapalli	3,876	173	3,798	78	8,210.91	28,432.72	608.81	
5.	Pudukottai	1,846	52	1,798	48	6,731.94	17,760.86	299.70	
6.	Thanjavur	1,666	120	1,611	55	13,329.89	7,298.79	632.39	
7.	Nagapattinam	1,989	137	1,917	72	25,614.93	13,971.67	7,023.07	4,930.1945
8.	Kumbakonam	2,218	149	2,178	40	45,080.59	33,146.68	565.43	978.1207
9.	Cuddalore	2,827	121	2,755	72	8,660.91	12,886.66	471.78	1,658.1863
10.	Madurai	3,106	104	3,015	91	5,207.93	16,230.15	597.81	650.1076
11.	Ramanathapuram	1,774	110	1,695	79	10,298.28	10,542.77	373.42	2,521.1162
12.	Tirunelveli	2,899	138	2,812	87	42,832.08	24,452.94	3,631.72	
13.	Nagercoil	691	52	680	11	1,566.98	682.14	23.13	
14.	Coimbatore	1,957	146	1,879	78	980.52	12,141.76	2,113.14	

15.	Erode	1,551	107	1,487	64	1,010.91	11,114.24	1,785.32	116.1033
16.	Salem	2,163	114	2,114	49	1,280.24	11,047.62	0.29	474.1924
17.	Dharmapuri	1,983	27	1,885	98	925.60	13,586.39	24.76	
18.	Vellore	1,815	125	1,765	50	3,821.45	5,604.35	243.63	
	Total:	35,150	2,022	34,044	1,106	1,86,942.51	2,28,410.02	18,843.88	22,229.0297

Source: Commissioner Office, HR & CE , Madras - 34.

Note : Table 4.3 presents the total number of institutions 35,299 but the figures in this table 4.5 are taken from the 1987. This is older than the figures presented in the table 4.3. So there is discrepancy in the total number institutions controlled by the HR & CE.

TABLE - 4.6(a)

TOTAL AREA OF TEMPLE LANDS IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT (WET S) (1992)

Sl. No.	Name of Taluk	Wet Land (Acre-Cent)	of Wet Land	Dry Land (Acre-Cent)		Rainfed Land (Acre-Cent)	Total (Acre-Cent)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
1.	Thanjavur	1,367.63	7.26	270.12	---	1,637.75	1.10
2.	Thiruvaiyaru	713.86	3.80	386.54	23.84	1,124.34	0.75
3.	Papanasam '	1,385.27	7.36	424.55	9.19	1,819.01	1.21
4.	Mannargudi	3,557.18	18.88	952.53	183.41	4,590.02	3.05
5.	Orathanadu	171.48	0.92	546.57	---	718.05	0.48
6.	Pattukkottai	396.78	2.12	363.11	9.81	769.70	0.51
7.	Peravurani	84.34	0.45	315.07	---	399.41	0.26
8.	Kumbakonam	2,162.96	11.50	1,255.27	39.90	3,458.13	2.30
9.	Thiruvidadamarudur	3,427.70	18.21	1,405.20	0.46	4,833.45	3.22
10.	Tiruthuraiipoondi	3,599.57	19.12	3,689.46	240.68	7,529.71	5.01
11.	Vedaranyam	1,953.86	10.38	250.52	10,122.29	1,23,326.67	82.11
	Total	18,817.63	100.00	9,858.94	10,629.58	1,50,206.24	100.00

*Includes Valangaiman.

** Includes Needamangalam

The above stated Taluks are coming under the purview of Deputy Commissioner, Office, HR Thanjavur

Source,: Deputy Commissioner Office, HT 8, CE Thanjavur.

TABLE - 4.6 (b)
Area of Temple lands in the East Thanjavur.

Temple Lands:

	in hectares	
Nanjai (Wet lands)	44,275. 36	
Punjai (dry lands)	38,806. 95	
Manavari (rain fe)	1,003 : 91	and 9894 sq.ft.
No. of listed institutions	:	316
No. of non-listed institutions	:	3,327
Total	:	3,643

Temples and Mutts as landed magnates:

Thiyagaraja Swamy Thirukoil in Tiruvarur owns 7000 acres in 147 villages. Out of this, 2000 acres were acquired by the Government in 1955 under the Estates Abolition Act. The Government of Tamilnadu gave Rs. 85,000 as compensation and Rs.62,000 as annual grant.

According to S.S.Iyer, 141 as per the management of the temple, no tenant of the temple lands was cultivating more than 5 acres of land as per the ceiling Act of 1961. In a number of villages under the control of the Temple, Tenants' co-operative societies had been set up to manage the temple lands. It was reported that the societies collected the fair rent under the Fair Rent Act of 1956. But it was found that generally the rent charged by the temple ranged between 360 kgs. and 450 kgs. of paddy per acre per fasli, while the fair-rent would range only between 240 kgs. and 300 kgs. S.S. Iyer had come to this conclusion after a study of the tenants' co-operative farmers societies (TCFS) in Musakhulam, Katarankontan and Kurvirameswaram. For instance, the president of the society himself in Katarankontan had been given about 30 acres in lease, a clear violation of the law and contrary to the information supplied by the temple authorities.¹⁸

The Thiagarajaswamy temple at Thirukuvalai (IDr. Kalaignar's native village) owns in the village 950 acres of wet land and 100 acres of topes and gardens and about 1000 acres of wet

and dry land in other villages. It is obvious that a large number of landlords in the villages have been in control of these lands through benami leases.

The Kashyalingaswami temple in Kilvelur owns 920 acres of wet land out of which 450 acres are held by 200 tenants. These tenants are claiming ownership of these lands under the provisions of the Rent Reduction Act of 1949, by which those who were tenants since 1933 were to be given proprietary rights in land. 250 acres have been allotted to Tenants Farming Societies with a total membership of 100 persons and 100 acres are under the self-cultivation of the temple. But a large area remains with the temple which is in formally controlled by big land owners.¹⁹

The Singaravelu Swami Temple at Sikkal, a famous shrine owns 1200 acres of wet land and 1200 acres of coconut gardens. While 500 acres of wet land and 1000 acres of coconut gardens are under the self management of the temple, 700 acres of wet land has been given on lease to about 170 tenants. A series of violent incidents took place in 1967-68 in Sikkal in connection with the agitation of agricultural labourers for higher wages. The temple management in collaboration with the police authorities in alleged to have suppressed and harassed the agricultural labourers. As a special case, this temple has been permitted to hold 300 acres of land under self-cultivation while under the Trusts Act of 1961, 20 acres were fixed as the ceiling for self-cultivation. Vedaranya temple in Tiruthuraipoondi taluk, along with 16 small temples in the villages under its control owns 13,051 acres in 43 villages. These lands have been leased out to 2000 tenants _ The temple also gets an annual compensation of Rs.30,000 for its salt pans taken over by the government. It also has jewellery worth Rs.1,41,751. Two Tenant Farming Societies have been organized to manage some of the temple lands. Even though the temple authorities declare that no tenant had more than 5 acres, it was discovered by S.S. Iyer 142 in his field study that the agent of the temple who was entrusted with the collection of rent from the temple tenants of the village Kunnalur who own nearly 1550 acres of land, and of which the temple agent controls 50 acres on his own accord.²⁰

Mutt Lands:

The (three) religious trusts Dharmapuram Adheenam, Thiruvaduthurai Adheenam and Thiruppanandal Adheenam are three of the biggest landholding agencies in the districts of Thanjavur and Nagai-Quai-de-Milleth. They own 75,000 acres, 25,000 acres and 20,000 acres of land respectively, most of which is concentrated in Thanjavur District.²¹

The Dharmapuram Adheenam has about 3500 acres under self-cultivation. The Aveclayer Koil in Arantangi Taluk, controlled by the Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam own about 7000 acres in 45 villages. Not much information is available about the control and use of the lands owned by these trusts.

The A/m, Vydeeswaran Koil, Sirkali Taluk is under the management of the Dharmapuram Adheenam. It owns more than 8000 acres in 15 villages. Another temple in Sirkali, under the control of the Dharmapuram Adheenam, owns about 8000 acres.

Apart from these, there are many more temples in this district which own lands and a good proportion of these lands are under male-fide possession.

In 1976, some of the lands of Vydeeswaran Koil, Sirkali were leased to cultivating tenants in accordance with the Public Trusts Act. The Sarvodaya Mandel reported, however, that a considerable area of temple lands were leased to landlords who did not qualify. as tenants under the Act. Local residents believed that many more acres were leased to such bogus tenants.

The Ganapathia Pillai commission appointed by the Government of Tamilnadu to study the causes of agrarian unrest in East Thanjavur in 1969 reported that trustees were reluctant to implement the policy underlying the Public Trusts Act, and that about one eighth of the leases given out by those institutions were bogus.²²

There are about 600 public trusts of religious and charitable endowments institutions owning about 17,000 acres of land in the taluks of Mayiladuthurai, Sirkali, Nannilam, Thiruthurai poondi and Nagappattinam. The Ganapathia Pillai Commission was able to ascertain that the charitable and religious institutions had allowed their tenants to hold more than 5 standard acres of land. But the Public Trust Act of 1961 did not allow the tenants to hold more than that. The commission did not have the opportunity to verify the ramifications of this Act. It was reported to the Commission that nearly 635 tenants of these charitable and religious institutions held more than the limit allowed by the Act. Moreover, such leases were alleged to have been taken in the names of sons and son-in-laws of trustees. A more detailed survey is necessary in this respect. Even though the Public Trusts Act possesses the sections to punish the guilty by taking away the excess lands held by them, the authorities are not prepared to go ahead with it.

Ganapathia Pillai Commission's estimate that about 1/8" of the leases given out by those institutions were bogus was considered by Kathleen Gough 144 as an under estimation. She claims that her data had suggested that the number of bogus leases given out was large."

Notes and References:

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2. ibid, Page-72
3. HRE Commission Report, op.cit., Page-15. Vinaya Pitaka: Code of conduct compiled by the Buddhists to be observed both by the teacher and disciples in the mutt. Now it is being followed as a code of conduct by the Hindu mutts.
Saivite. Follower of Lord Siva. Vaisnavite . follower of Lord Vishnu,
4. G O 3503 (LSG) 10th August, 1926, MRO, Ramaswarny Tatachana, D "The Vanamamalai Temple and Mutt", in HRE Commission Report, PP - 92-94.
5. Rajahsihamani, V, (1971), "The Tamil Nadu Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, 1959", (Tamil Nadu Act No.22 of Madras, Page-5
6. G.O.No.38 Legislative, dated 5th March 1884.
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8. Franklin, A., Presler, (1987), Religion under Bureaucracy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. New York, PP - 73 -109.
9. Presler, op at , P 76
10. Presler, op cit PP 76 to 77
11. Office of the Commi n ssioer HR & CE (Administration), Madras.
12. Ganapathiya Pillai, S., (1969), Report submitted by the Commission on Inquiry into Agrarian Labour Problems of East Thanjavur District, 1969. Government of Tamil Nadu
13. Ganapathia Pillai, S., (1969), Commission of Inquiry on the Agrarian Problems of East Thanjavur District Government of Tamilnadu, P.4
14. Kathleen Gough, op.cit., P.32.
15. ibicl, Iyer, S.S., PP.26-28
16. ibicl, Iyer, S.S., PP.26-28
17. Iyer, S.S op cit PP26-38
18. Board of Revenue and local revenue officers, the collectors.



அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழ்

அறிவிப்பு / Announcement

அன்பான தமிழ்ச் சொந்தங்களே

வணக்கம்.

வரும் 2026, ஏப்ரல் மாதம் வெளிவரும் அரண் பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழ்க்கான ஆய்வுக் கட்டுரைகள் ஆய்வாளர்களிடமிருந்து வரவேற்கப்படுகின்றன.

கட்டுரை வந்து சேர வேண்டிய கடைசி நாள் - ஏப்ரல் 10. அதற்கு பின் வரும் கட்டுரைகள் ஏப்ரல் இதழில் இடம்பெறாது என்பதை தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம்.

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