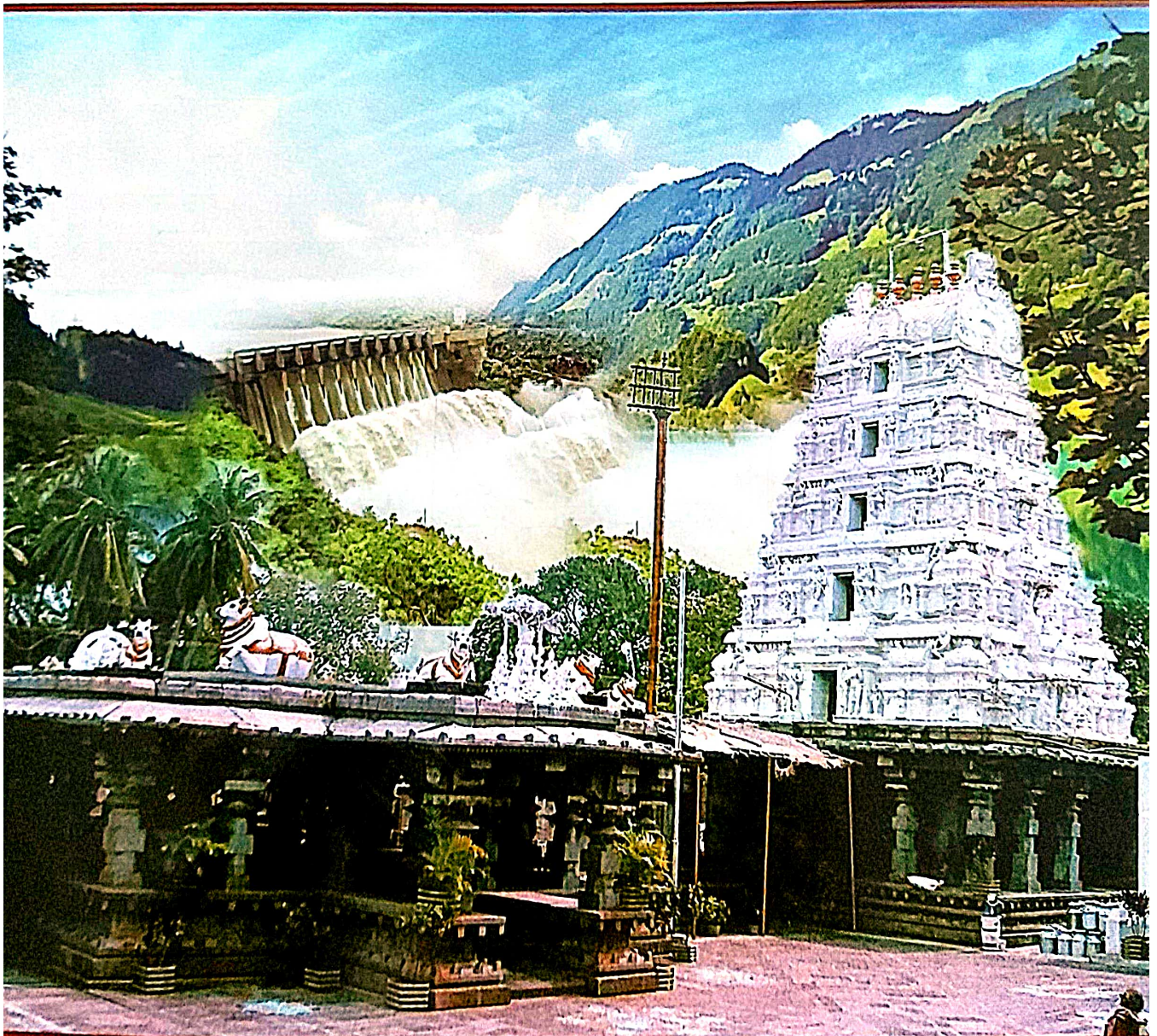


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Prof. G.Venkata Ramaiah



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Dr. M.Srinivas Rao
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Endowment of Different Social Classes to the Vaishnava Temples in Northern Coastal Andhra : An Inscriptional Study

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Generally in the middle of the 14th Century A.D., the Western World transformed into modern age and even in India, the state, society and economy were transformed from its medieval past towards its modern and colonial future¹. It is well known fact that medieval period in India was an evidence of religious envious contention mainly in between the Hinduism and Islam. At that juncture reformation was started in Hinduism in the name of Bhakti Concept.

Ramanujacharya, the former one among the Bhakti Saints. He was the cause and responsible for the development and propagation of Vaishnavism in South India. Particularly based on the Epigraphical evidences it is came to known since A.D., 1000 onwards due to preaches and activities of Ramanuja, Anandathreertha², Naraharitheertha³ and Krishna Chaitanya. A number of Vaishnava Temples were came into light and Vaishnavism, which gave importance of social equality. It was propagated maximum in Northern Coastal Andhra Region and it is propitious to Hinduism.

The present study is carried out to determine the Endowments of Different Social Classes to the Vaishnava Temples in Northern Coastal Region (the land in between Eleru to Bahuda River) during the Medieval period i.e. from 1000 A.D. to 1600 A.D. of Andhra Desa is called Northern Coastal Andhra. In this period the present study area was experienced with the rule of several dynasties viz., Eastern Gangas, Eastern Chalukyas, Kakatiyas, Reddy Kings, Gajapathis of Orissa, Vijayanagara Rulers and with the rule of petty local dynasties of Velanadu Chiefs, Chalukyas of Pithapuram Chalukyas of Yelamanchili, Matsya kings of Vaddadi, Pallavas of Veeraghattam etc., At that juncture besides the rulers of various dynasties, the subordinates Chiefs also built several temples and these temples were enriched by their magnificent grants like lands, villages, tanks, cash, perpetual lamps and etc., for its maintenance. By this process not only temples but also temple towns were raised. Temple played a vital role like banks in financial transactions of villages. Each temple had a treasury of its own and it sanctioned money in the form of loan to the villages. For the sake of cultivation and also utilized for the purposes of improving the tanks, canals and other irrigation works.

Thus the temples witnessed a new glory in medieval period and this shows inevitable role of the temples in the progress of economic life of people. The temple constructions by the rulers in the medieval period are still surviving in the

Northern Coastal Andhra. All these were also endowed with gifts of lands⁴, villages⁵, perpetual lamps⁶ and etc., by different social groups. Regarding this we came to know by a Plethora of Inscriptional material and some of them are presenting as follows.....

An Inscription from Bhavanarayana Swamy Temple at Sarpavaram, East Godavari District dated A.D. 1073, states that a women named Meenavana Mahadevi donated 50 cows. According the Inscriptional evidence actually she gave 50 cows to Golla Meena Boina and he used to supply 1 Manika of ghee daily for the perpetual lamp in the temple⁷.

In A.D. 1097 a Boya caste person named Mana Boya donated 50 cows to the Bavanarayana Swamy Temple at Sarpavaram for the perpetual lamp for the commemoration and merit of his father. And the same year he also once again donated 50 cows to the same God for the wick of perpetual lamp⁸.

Two Tamil Incriptions dated A.D. 1123 and A.D. 1201 from Sarpavaram, states that a Vysya person called Brahnamudi setty donated 50 cows to the Bavanarayana Swamy Temple of the same for the perpetual lamp⁹.

An Inscription from Chalukya Bhimavaram, East Godavari District dated A.D. 1115, states that a certain person from Merchant Community named Mandavya a Vaisya of Chalukya Bhimavaram, East Godavari District. He was responsible for the construction of Narayana Swamy Temple and he donated 20 buffaloes for the perpetual lamp. This temple is called Mandvya Narayana Swamy Temple in the name of Mandavya¹⁰.

In A.D. 1177, records the gift of land, made by Mallapa Deva for the maintenance of Mandavya Narayana Temple viz., Daily worship etc¹¹.

According to one Inscription (undated) from Namagiri, East Godavari District, It is came to known that one a common man Sambhu was the responsible for the Installation of Idols of Lakshmi and Dwarapalakas in the Venugopala Swamy Temple and Sambhu constructed temple whereas some of devotees constructed steps to Ardhmandapa of this temple¹².

One interesting note that a foreigner named Gayaki Bagala Devi from Srilanka visited Sri Kurmanadha Swamy Temple at Srikurmam, Srikakulam District and gifted valuable tributes in the year 1256 A.D.¹³.

An Inscription from Mandavya Narayana Swamy Temple at Samarlakota, East Godavari District in the year A.D. 1272 states that Malli Reddy constructed a pillar in Thiruchuttu Maliga¹⁴.

An inscription dated A.D. 1353, states a women named Lakshmi Dasi got permission and some money from local ruler Mummadi Nayaka and meanwhile she also used to Pawn her daughters and gathered economical resources. Finally donated 2 villages to the temple at the time of installation of idol of Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Korukonda, East Godavari District¹⁵.

Another Inscription dated A.D. 1294 states Narahariteerdha installed "Sita Rama Lakshmana idol at Srikurmam Temple¹⁶ in Srikakulam District.

An Inscription from Srikurmam temple dated A.D. 1598 states a man he belongs to Thelaka caste. He donated one Ganugu for the maintenance of perpetual lamp¹⁷.

An Inscription (undated) from Chodavaram 'Kesava Swamy Temple (Vizag Dist.) registers the two putties of land grant by the Yadavas of Juthada village to the God Kesava Swamy for perpetual lamp¹⁸.

Another Inscription dated A.D. 1163 states Puravari Nurupootu he donated 10 Puttis of land to Suryanarayana Swamy Temple at Arasavalli, Srikakulam District¹⁹.

The rulers of Northern Coastal Andhra forms a glorious period in the cultural history of medieval Andhra desa. They patronized Hinduism and as most of them they were the followers of Vaishnavism, they encouraged the participation of common people in the propagation of same by giving endowments in the form of cows, buffaloes, lands, and villages. In this connection, people from Yadav, Boya, Thelike, Sani and Setty castes used to donate gifts to the Vaishnava temples in Northern Coastal Andhra. Among the donors the unique one was a women named Lakshmi Dasi who used to mortgage her daughters even for the God Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy at Korukonda. So such type of contribution is unseen in the religious history of Northern Coastal Andhra particularly in Medieval period and came to known by the above evidences there were Vaishnavates even in abroad like Srilanka. This shows the propagation Vaishnavism in Srilanka also and religions contacts in between the present study area and Srilanka.

Thus the inscriptions of Vaishnava Temples in Northern Coastal Andhra states the Endowments of different social class.

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