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SOCIO-ECONOMIC SETTINGS IN THE DEVADANA AND BRAHMADEYA VILLAGES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SUDDHARATNESVARAR TEMPLE INSCRIPTIONS

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Abstract:- **Suddharatnesvarar, a temple town**, lies at a distance of 2 km North East of Uttathur in Trichy District in Tamil Nadu, had been the urban center during the Chola period. The agricultural development and trade settlements around this temple town was the significant factor for the urbanization of Uttathur. The Suddharatnesvarar temple inscriptions bring to light on many Devadana and Brahmadeya villages around this temple town which contributed for the development of the temple economy. These villages had been so compact and corporate from the early times.

Keywords: **Devadana** – Land of village granted to Hindu temple; **Saba** – a Brahmins assembly and Village court; **Brahmadeya** – Land or village granted to Brahmins; **Brahmins** – a high position.

INTRODUCTION

The great chola king RajaRaja I was traveling through this village once. His servants were paving the path by cutting down the plants and removing the grass. In one particular place, they were shocked to find blood oozing out from the ground. It was brought the king's notice. As per his order, the land was dug and a Siva Linga idol was discovered; it had a cut on its head. The king built this temple with this Siva Linga idol as the main deity.

ROYAL GRANTS

Right from the Chola times there were two important royal grants which called as *Devadanam* and *Brahmadeyam*. *Devadanam* means the lands in the villages were given to the temple and temple paying taxes to the kings. *Devadana Iraiyyili* which refers to the temple land exempted from the taxes. *Devadana* village usually managed by the temple authorities and central government under the supervision of local assemblies. *Brahmadeya* means lands donated to the Brahmanas. *Devadana Brahmadeya* means the tax free lands donated to the Brahmanas and also for temple expense. According to the Suddharatnesvarar temple inscriptions, large area of lands in *Devadana Brahmadeya* villages were gifted to Sri Mahadeva temple at Suddharatnesvarar. These lands were converted into cultivable lands by the authorities and assigned for various purposes. The lands purchased by the kings, merchants and individuals were donated to the *sabha* are also revenue general and this lands was utilised for the purpose of lighting lamp in the temple, pujas, and some of team assigned for wages to dancers, gardeners and musicians.

One of the inscriptions of Rajaraja Chola issued in 1009 A.D. refers to the purchase of two *veli* of tax-free land from the assembly of Peravur by the officer of the king Koil Mayilai Madurantaka Muvendavelan of Siringin who donated the same to Suddharatnesvarar temple. An inscription of Rajaraja in 1009 A.D. registers the donation of garden lands by queen Sembian Mahadevi and Panchavan Mahadevi.

An inscription of Kulothunga III issued in 1200 A.D. reveals the royal gift of two *veli* of land Karavidai Mangalam in Tiruvalandurinadu as Tirunamathukkani and as tax-free devedana for the expenses of Pidari worship in

the Suddharatnesvarar temple.

Soil Composition in the Devadana Brahmadeya Villages

The social composition of the *Devedana* and *Brahmadeya* villages also reveals through the Suddharatnesvarar temple inscriptions. The new agraharas, chaturvedimangalams were created by the Chola kings in Suddharatnesvarar region is attested by the Chola king in Suddharatnesvarar region is attested by an inscription of Vikramachola's in the year 1125 A.D. The Bramin beneficiaries were bestowed the rights of cultivation and supervision of lands by the donors. The bramins also played prominent role in the village assembly known as *Sabha*. The *Sabha* was exclusively a Brahmin assembly which was looking after the administration of the *Brahmadeya* in several aspects such as maintaining the land records, local levies, land revenues, irrigation works, up keep of the tanks, and administration of justice in setting disputes. The brahmanas were entrusted with various duties and called by different names.

The next layer of the society in the *Devadana Brahmadeya* villages was occupied by the Vellalas. They were also called *Marudamakkal*. The Vellalas were involved in irrigation and cultivation. According to Arthanareesvarar temple inscriptions the Vellala commended a good position in the society next to the Brahmins. The name of the Vellalas are mentioned with prefix and suffix in the temple inscriptions.

Next to the Vellalas, the merchant class formed a vital link in the economy of the place. The merchants were wealthier and more influential than the artisans. The merchants were associated with many guilds and called in different names. The merchant guilds functioned under the guidance of spiritual head (*Achamar*). As Suddharatnesvarar was one of the important mercantile towns (*Nagaram*) in Villupuram area the merchant class settled in large number in an around Suddharatnesvarar.

Apart from the three sections the *Kaikolas* the potters, goldsmith, carpenters, *manradi*, *Kammalas* and *Deveradiyar* were settled in the *Devadana Brahmadeya* villages. They were classified into *Valangai* and *Idangai* factions. The Suddharatnesvarar temple inscriptions attested these facts.

Economic Condition in the Devadana and Brahmadeya Villages

The Arthanareesvarar temple inscriptions clearly reveal the classification of lands, land units, irrigation facilities, tax collection in the *Devadana Brahmadeya* villages in Suddharatnesvarar region.

The lands at *Brahmadeya* villages were classified into *nanchai* (wet land) and *punchai* (dry land). The idea of classification of land into two for tax purposes is known from the inscriptions by the use of the terms *taram* (grade) and *taramili* (not graded). The land units mentioned in the inscriptions of Suddharatnesvarar are *kuli*, *ma*, *kani*, *araikani*, *mundrikai*, and *veli* seem to be the lowest and highest measurement respectively. Apart from the fractional measures *araikani* and *mukkani* were also in usage. Lands were measured by special *kols* (mols) and it is mentioned from the 11th century Chola inscriptions as *nilamalandalkol*. Its length was 3.65 cms or 146 inches or 12 feet. This is also referred to *Panneeradikol* (rod of 12 feet) which was used in revenue survey during the 14th century.

The land rates also mentioned in the Suddharatnesvarar temple inscriptions. An inscriptions of Rajaraja in the year of 1009 A.D. refers to the purchase of temple land for 25 Kalanju of gold. An inscription of Rajaraja III in the year of 1243 A.D. records the sale of quarter veli of land by the temple authorities for 2500 *kasus*.

Names of the gift as Mentioned in the Suddharatnesvarar Sri Mahadeva Temple Inscriptions

Name of the Ruler	Kalanju	Pon	Madai	Nirai	Manjadi	Kasu	Total Inscription
Rajaraja I	2	2	1	1	2	3	11
Rajendra I	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Kulottunga I	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Vikramachola I	2	2	-	-	3	4	11
Kulottunga III	3	-	1	-	2	-	6

IRRIGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The inscripational evidences reveal that an excellent system of irrigation prevailed in an around of Suddharatnesvarar which helped the increased cultivation of varied seasonal and commercial crops. Since the region

was situated in the lower point of Gadilam delta, various water resources like *aru* (river), *vayakkal* (canal), *kulam* (tank), were used for cultivation. They were variously named after the rulers and members of the ruling class.

The Chola economy was essentially agrarian in character with trade and industrial crafts operating within the limit of an agrarian economy. The proliferation of Brahmadeya in the later period created an awareness of the importance of lands as an economic unit. The inscriptional evidences from Sri Suddharatnesvarar temple reveals various tax terms, grain measurements in the names of the Chola monarchs.

TAXATION

The Suddharatnesvarar temple inscription reveal the tax and rent collection from *Devadana Brahmadeya* villages also. An inscription of Rajendra I in 1021 A.D. reveals that the collections of 2800 *kalam* of paddy from 20 *veli* of temple land from the *Devadana Brahmadeya* villages. Another inscription of Vikramachola in 1125 A.D. records the collections of 5795 *kalam* of paddy from the 191/31 *ma mukkani* ½ kani land in the tax free *devadana* villages. One more inscription of the same king in 1125 A.D. denotes that the tax rent of 345 *kalam tuni* 2 *veli* of paddy was collected from the 6 *veli* of temple land.

After the Vijayanagar period the social composition and mercantile growth of Suddharatnesvarar region disturbed by various factors. Suddharatnesvara and its mercantile importance came to an end after 18th century.

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