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GRANTS TO TEMPLES BY CHOLA QUEENS

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Abstract:

During the period of Cholas Women enjoyed a high status in society. There were no restrictions in their social life and activities. They donated money, materials and land to temples. Images made of gold, silver, copper and bronze were donated by the royal family This paper "Grants to temples by CholaQueens" deals endowments made by the Royal Ladies of Chola.

Introduction:

The temple is a vehicle of religion built for the fulfilment of the spiritual desires of the people. It was and is a powerful social and economic entity and a source of religious inspiration for the people. The Hindus give more importance to 'Danam' (Gifts). It is ordained in the Dharmasastra of the Hindus that a portion of earnings of every man should be set apart and devoted to charity.¹

Grants:

Endowments were made by every class of people. Donors can be divided into three groups. Members of the royal family, officials and private donors such as merchants, artisans etc. Due to this temples became very wealthy and served as the source of income to the town. The Chola kings were great patrons of the temples. The king's mother², sisters and queens made varied endowments.

Purpose of Grants:

The grants were made to the temples for various and specific purposes like the maintenance of perpetual lamp, for sacred food offering, for sacred bath, for remunerating the priest and other temple workers and for playing musical instruments in the temple. The donation also used for feeding the devotees, for meeting the expenses of festivals and other purposes.³

Great Royal Women of Cholas:

There are number of evidences available for the study of royal women's contribution to temple during the Cholas. The queens had shown great interest in the propagation of religion, by building stone temples in Chola region.

Sembiyanmadevi the most respected queen of Gandaraditya was the daughter of Malavaraiya chieftain ruling Tirukkoyilur area as a subordinate of the Cholas. She was the mother of Uttamachola. Most of her life she spent in erecting religious edifices and granting endowments for its upkeep. One such was the temple of Uktavetisvara at Kuttalam in Mayavaram Taluk. It was reconstructed by the meritorious act of her. A gift of land was made for offerings, worship, music and other expenses and for reciting the sama, taittiriya and chandogasmaveda in the temple⁴. An inscription dated in the 2nd regnal year Rajaraja I records an order of SembiyanMadevi fixing the allotment of paddy for the several items of daily expense in the