

Chapter III

Status of Devadāsīs under the Cōlas

The history of the *devadāsī* system was very ancient. It was a universal phenomenon in the olden days. It was practiced all over the world in one form or the other, with certain variations. Its origin could be attributed to the fertility cult, which was very dominant in the ancient world. The *devadasi* system was widely prevalent in ancient India. It is not clear when the system originated in Tamilnadu. Still certain a scholar gives it a pure Tamil origin,¹ and as old as the temple in South India². However, adequate materials are not available to establish the fact that the system was it vogue in Tamilnadu before the Caṅkam Age.

In medieval Tamil nadu, it was one of the very dominant socio-religious institutions. It evolved as a result of the fusion of many such socio-religious and cultural institutions. The traces could be found in the Caṅkam literature. It appears to have become an institution towards the end of the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. under the patronage of the Pallavas and the Pāṇḍyas, who were influenced by the *Bhakti* movement and the agamic traditions, and it was institutionalized in their temples. It was extended throughout Tamil nadu under the liberal support of the Cholas and the later Pandyas.³

‘One would bathe herself at dawn and adoring herself, go to temple and stand well in sight of the God.’⁴ The *Rauravāgama* enjoins on them severe qualifications. The *Kamikāgama* stipulates that “she must be perfect in knowledge, be perfectly decorated, have piety on *Śakti*, have all perfect features, must be pure and clean, and have mastery of the thirty-eight arts. It depicts her as a perfect object for sensual pleasure. Other literary works and inscriptions insist on their beauty as

¹ S.K.Mukerji, *Prostitution in India*, p.173.

² G.Venkitachalam, *Dance in India*, Bombay, p.21.

³ K.Sadasivam, *Devadasi system in Medieval Tamilnadu*, Trivandrum,1993, p.5.

⁴ *Koil Olungu*, p.95.

an essential qualification. The *Periyapurāṇam*⁵ and the *Tiruvārūrpurāṇam*,⁶ contain references to the beauty of the *devadāsīs* of the Tiruvarur Temple. An inscription addresses a *devadasi* as *alakilumalakiya* (beauty of beauties). These may indicate the strict moral continence enjoined on them. However, it was not insisted on the low grade *devadāsīs*.

Categories of *Parattaiyar*

The classical works in Tamil tell of two principal categories of *parattaiyar*: (i) *kātal parattai*⁷ (concubine) and (ii) *ceripparattai*⁸ (public strumpet), Ilampuranar the commentator of *Tolkappiyam*, brings another category, viz., *kāmakkiḷattiyar*⁹ (a variation of *kadal parattai*). In classical Tamil works *Kadal parattaiyar* were called *kanikaiyar*.¹⁰ The *Cilappatikāram* and *Maṇimēkalai*, give a graphic picture of *kanikayar*, their various divisions, their proficiencies and their social status. The former traces four kinds of them. They were: (i) *nāṭaka-kanikai*¹¹, (the actress), (ii) *kavakanikai*¹² (dancing girl of the battle field), (iii) *āṭar-Kūttiyar*¹³ (expert dancing girl), (iv) *evarsiladiyar*¹⁴ (cooking girls of temple kitchen). Mātavi the expert dancer of Pukār, was a descendant of the *nataka-kanikayar* division.¹⁵ The later work categories them into three divisions. They were: (i) *tonmudu-kanikai*¹⁶ (aged harlot), (ii) *nataka-kanikai*¹⁷, (the actress), (iii) *kaṭavuḷ-kanikai*¹⁸ (god's confidant) etc. The *Kāmikāgama* grades them into three divisions according to some of their privileges and functions. They were (i) *rudra-ganika*¹⁹ (confidant

⁵ *Periyapurāṇam, Thadut*, Vs. 131-136.

⁶ *Tiruvārur Purāṇam*, 3:22.

⁷ *Akananuru*, 396.

⁸ *Purananuru*, 365:8.

⁹ K.K.Pillay, *A social History of the Tamils* pt.I, Madras 1975, p.80, pp.376-377.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* p.376.

¹¹ *Cilappadikāram, padīham*, 15.

¹² *Ibid.* 5:50, p.157.

¹³ *Ibid.* p.139.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 5:51, p.157.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.20.

¹⁶ *Maṇimēkalai*, 24:2, 16:6.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 23:75.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 23:95.

¹⁹ *Kāmikāgama*, Acharyalaksana patala, *slokas* 225-260.

to Śiva) (ii) *rudra kannikai* (virgin of Siva), (iii) *rudra-dasi* (slave of Śiva). They were all *vesiyar* or *dāsis* (public women).

According to classical works in Tamil they were experts in dancing, singing, playing on the instruments and entertaining²⁰. *Kāmasūtra* of Vatsyayana also considers them all adepts in fine arts and was known for their beauty and artistic accomplishments. In theory they were not allowed to marry. Subsequently these women were engaged in temple service and it is evident from a number of inscriptions²¹ of the medieval period. Of the tradition of *parattaiyar* or *ganikaiyar*, those who served gods in the temples were known as *katavul ganikaiyar*, or in later days as *rudra-gankaiyar*. This indicates that these girls were associated with temple service, perhaps even before the composition of *Manimekalai*. Both the Tamil epics give them, particularly the traditions of *kadal parattaiyar* and *katavul ganikaiyar* a high status in society. This is evident from the social esteem enjoyed by *Matavi* and *Manimekalai* themselves. *Kamikagama*, also accords them a high social status.²² Their life was characterised by fidelity to the chosen person²³ generally to the temple priest.²⁴

The tradition of the *kūttiyar* or *viraliiyar* also has a share in the evolution of the *devadasi* system. As prominent members of the class of artistes, *kūttiyar* or *viraliiyar*, were known even from the days of *Tolkappiyar*.²⁵ They were professional teachers and dancers. In their performances, they were assisted by *panars*, (musicians), *porunars* (composers of musical interludes) and *avinayars* (teachers of gesture). The *kūttiyar* danced to the beat of the drum on the stage in the cities during festivals.²⁶ They worshipped the deity with folded hands and tuned the

²⁰ *Purananuru*, 152:13-18, *Akananuru*, 76.

²¹ V.Rangachary, *ATLIMP*, Vol.I, Madras, 1917; Cg. 1080-1, Cg.1090.

²² *Kamikagama*, Acharya, s.1.236.

²³ *Ahananuru*, 396.

²⁴ *Kamikagama*, Acharya, s.1.278.

²⁵ *Tolkappiyam*, *Porum*, *Chey*, 182; *Karpū*, 52.

²⁶ *Ahananuru*, 76:1, 111:9, 352:4-5; *Padirrupattu*, 56:1-2.

*kurinchipan*²⁷, (a kind of music). The *viraliyar*, were praised for their hilarious songs in praise of kings and chiefs.²⁸ An inscription of the ninth century A.D. records the services of *kuttigal*²⁹ (*kuttiyar*) in temple worship. Inscriptions of the Cōla period register the appointment and association of *pāṇar* in temple service.³⁰ Later day inscriptions³¹ too bear evidence to the association of *kuttiyar* in ritual dance. These evidences establish the fact that the *kūttiyaar* had a major share in the evolution of the *devadāsi* system.

Another theory traces the ancestry of the devadasis to the *konti makalir* (captive or slave women) of the Caṅkam age. *Pattinappalai*³² refers to the employment of them in temple service. After his victorious wars, Karikala is said to have built a temple for Siva in Pumpuhar. To serve the God of this temple, he employed some of his ‘captive women’. In *Maduraikkanchi*, they are said to have danced at marriage parties, as if they were the heavenly damsels. During such functions, gods were also invoked.³³ The two Tamil epics provide us with some more evidences to the existence of the system in post-Sangam age. *Silappadikaram* refers to *maṅgala-dāsis*, whom the commentator identifies with the servants of Tirumagal.³⁴ Ilaṅko says that Kōvalan crossed the *matar vidi* (street for women) at Madurai, which the commentator equates with the street of *tali-ppendugal*³⁵ (*temple-girls*). At another place Ilaṅgo tells us of the *nalamperu kannular*, whom the commentator calls as *santik-kuttar*, who danced before Siva and Kali.³⁶ *Manimekalai* refers to the quarters of such women in the city of Vañchi.³⁷ Further, some archaeological evidences lend support to the prevalence of ritual dancing in the Caṅkam age. The female bust, excavated amidst other objects of religious

²⁷ *Malaipatukadam*, II, 358-360.

²⁸ *Porunararrupadai*, I, 47.

²⁹ C.Minakshi, op.cit., pp. 177-78, and 281.

³⁰ SII, vol.XXIII, No.308.

³¹ ARE, of 1929-30, No.364.

³² *Pattinappalai*, II, 246-49.

³³ P.V.Somasundram, (ed.), *Maduraikkanchi*, Madras, p.146.

³⁴ *Silappadikaram*, 6:125, p.197.

³⁵ Ibid. 16:103, p.430.

³⁶ Ibid. 5:49, p.157.

³⁷ *Manimekalai*, 28:46-47.

importance from Tirukampuliyur near Tiruchirapalli, suggests she was a dancing-girl.³⁸ An inscription found in a potsherd, unearthed from Alagiri, suggests according to T.V. Mahalingam, a *kūttan*, (a dancer).³⁹ These objects are placed in the beginning of the Christian era.⁴⁰ These facts suggest that the system had come into existence during the Sangam age.

However, it is difficult to assign a specific date to the origin of the *devadasi* system in Tamilnadu. Evidence from the Caṅkam classics indicate that the third century A.D. In the subsequent period from fourth to sixth century A.D. North Indian systems and values and the Puranic tales penetrated into existing socio-religious Institutions of Tamil Country.⁴¹ This is evident from Agamic form of ritual worship was also making its impact on the people. As a result, many of temples sprang up and hither to royal upcaras, (ceremonious rites) given some ritual orientation and were allowed entry into temples. By this time, the various streams of socio-religious and cultural institutions got merged together to bring about the devadasi system. This becomes obvious from the introduction of dance and dancing girls in temple worship during the days of Kocceṅkanan,⁴² a Cōḷa monarch of the fourth-fifth century A.D.⁴³

Life of Devadasis

The *devadasi* had their own life system. The life of a *devadasi* was not an easy one. To become a devadasi a girl has to go through a few *samskaras* (rites of passage). These are the ritual marriage, branding ceremony, initiation into the performing arts, debut (*arangerru*), duties, and funeral honours. These rituals transform an 'ordinary' girl into an 'ever-auspicious female.'

³⁸ T.V.Mahalingam, (ed.) *Report on the Excavations in the Lower Kaveri Valley*, Madras, 1970, p.58.

³⁹ T.V.Mahalingam, *Early South Indian Palaeography*, Madras, 1974, p.310-11.

⁴⁰ K.K.Pillay, op.cit., p.81.

⁴¹ P.T.Srinivasa Iyengar, *History of the Tamils*, Madras, 1929, p.280.

⁴² C.V.Narayana Aiyar, *Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India*. Madras, p.321.

⁴³ K.Sadasivam, op.cit, pp.21-25.

Ritual Marriage

Any new entrant to temple service was received after the conduct of a marriage ceremony. It was a kind of spiritual marriage (hieros gamos as in ancient Greek religion). Spiritual marriage means participation in divine life. *Kamikagama*⁴⁴ calls that kind of marriage as *poṭṭuk-kattu* (trinket tying). In some other places, it was called *gajje puje*⁴⁵ (worship of the ankle-bells). It refers to the formal sacred marriage ceremony and the dedication of the girls to the temple. Records of the earlier age do not give details about the conduct of the ritual. An unpublished inscription (of the 11th -12th century A.D.) from the Bhuloganathar Temple at Tirumangalam (near Mayavaram) gives some details of the spiritual marriage. It refers to such divine marriages as *poṭṭuk-kattu* (trinket tying), a practice which became very runs as follows: *Sri bhunamattuponnittuk-konda yerra ana Virap-perumal manikkam*.

Moreover, *Kamikagama* prescribes certain age limits to the marriage of the new entrants. According to it a *rudra-dasi* should be married to the deity at the age of seven, eight and before the end of nine respectively. It advises that the marriage should be solemnised in an auspicious day, at the most auspicious hour. The *ācārya*, who had already observed the necessary fasts, should alone conduct the ceremony amidst all relatives. After the strict observance of the assigned *vratas* (fasts), the girl was to be seated in front of the sanctum sanctorum facing northward. The *ācārya*, who had already tied the tall (trinket) around the idol, should untie it and tie it around the neck of the girl. The girl, thus married, according to a record of A.D. 1189, and was honoured as *tiruvatkaippattal*⁴⁶ (she who had wedded God). Epigraphic and literary materials throw light on a few instances of girls thus married to the deity. Andal's marriage with Sri Ranganatha is

⁴⁴ *Kamikagama*, Acharya, sls, 245-300.

⁴⁵ G.O.No.23 (Legal), dated 26th January, 1948, (Government of Madras), or Madras Act of XXXI of 1947.

⁴⁶ ARE, No.411 of 1925.

conducted as an earliest reference to a 'bridal' dedication.⁴⁷ Followed by her foster-father, kinsmen and relatives, Antal was taken to Srinrangam on an auspicious day. After the observance of some rites, *kappunan* (*mangalanan-tali-trinket*) was tied round her neck,⁴⁸ and she was left at the feet of the Sri Ranganatha⁴⁹ appears to be a typical example of the dedication of an *emperumāṇaṭiyār* (servant of God).

A record⁵⁰ of eighth century A.D. gives evidence to the sacred marriage of a royal princess. According to it Niladevi, the daughter of Kulasekhara Alvar, was married to Lord Ranganatha of Srirangam. *Koil olugu*⁵¹ mentions that Kulasekhara Alvar gave all his wealth to Alagiyamanavala Perumal (Sri Ranganatha) as dowry. This is exactly the first time that we come across the institution of dowry. When Cholavalli (Uraiur Nacchiyar) the daughter of Nandasolan of Uraiur was thus married to Sri Ranganatha, a dowry of 360 *kalams* (a measure) of golden plates, containers and also a hundred maid servants was presented to the bride-groom.⁵² An inscription of ninth century A.D.⁵³ says that one girl named Mrugansetti was married to the deity of Parthibhasekharapuram. The Saivite (*Bhakti*) literature, however, does not give much detail about the sacred marriage of a girl. Several inscriptions of the subsequent period bear ample evidence to the prevalence of dowry. Thus they were married to the deity like any ordinary girl married to a mortal man.

Branding Ceremony

The girls thus married were branded with some symbol (*muttirai*) to show their perpetual bondage to the temples. The mark indicated two things: (i) No freedom to the slave-girl to go out of temple service, (ii) Clearly identified to which temple Siva or Visnu, she belonged to. It does not appear to be a universally

⁴⁷ *Nacchiyar Tirumoli* 1:5.

⁴⁸ *Andal's Varanamayiram*, vv. 1-11, and *Nacchiyar Tirumoli*, 6.

⁴⁹ Periyalvar, *Tirumoli*, 4:8:4.

⁵⁰ TAS., vol V. pp.102-114.

⁵¹ *Koil Olungu*, p.6.

⁵² *Ibid*, pp.5-6.

⁵³ TAS., vol. I. p.9.

accepted practice; hence very seldom the branding was done.⁵⁴ According to *Bhakti* literature, the *aṭiyār* (devotee) as a mark of self surrender used to brand him with a symbol on the body. Thus Śiva devotees branded themselves with the trident (*sula*) or bull (*risabha*) mark. St. Appar had the impression of *sula* and *risabha* (*idapa*) on his body. He is said to have done it in the *thunkanaimadam* of the Temple of Tiruppennadakam.

Several epigraphs of this period refer to the practice of branding slaves in temples. Inscriptions tell that *devadasis* of the Siva temples were branded with the trident mark and those of Vishnu temples with *śaṅkha* (conchshell) or *cakra* (discus) marks.⁵⁵ According to an inscription, devadasis and cows (surrendered to the temples) were branded with the trident mark (*sula ilaccinai*).⁵⁶ An inscription reads as follows, *tiruvilaiccinaiyum ittuc-chandradittavaral nerkkuruvadakk-kondu*⁵⁷ (agreed to serve God as long as Sun and Moon exist and therefore branded with the sacred symbols.)

Inscriptions, however, do not give any details about the method of branding. One of the hymns of the Āḷvārs explains the process of *arakkilaccinai ceitu*⁵⁸ (the branding with the sealing wax). According to customs of the Srivilliputtur Temple, on an auspicious day, the seal bearing the symbol (perhaps made of copper or silver) was kept in fire and then was pressed onto the right upper arm of the *emperumanadiyar* of Visnu Temples. She said that the conch symbol was branded on the left and *cakra* symbol on the right upper arm of the *devadasis*. They applied *tirumaṇ* (sacred red mud) to cure it. In Siva temples the metal having the trident or bull symbol was pressed with cotton on the right upper arm of the *devadasis*. They used *vilvam* (a medicinal grass) leaf as medicine. They considered this as a mark of

⁵⁴ N.Marxia Gandhi, *Tamilagattil Adimaikal*, in R.Nagaswamy's edition of Tamilnadu *Varalarukku Karuttarangu*, (TI), Madras, 1979, p.219.

⁵⁵ ARE., of 1921, No. 230; ARE., of 1921-22, pt.II, para.9.

⁵⁶ ARE., of 1921, No. 543; Ibid. of 1922, No. 539.

⁵⁷ SII. Vol. VIII, No. 396.

⁵⁸ *Divyaprabandham, Tiruccandavirutam*, 76; *Tamil Lexicon*, vol. I p.340.

respect for them. Once the *devadasis* were branded with a mark, they could not enter service outside even in a royal household in violation of this practice, some of them to the temple to which they belonged. This event makes it clear that the *devadasis* were the permanent property of the temples concerned.

Sacred marriages were sometimes not adhered to much against the covenant. Many of them got married either certain influential individuals or became concubines of priests or the reigning monarchs or chiefs. An inscription of A.D. 1049⁵⁹ says that one Chatural Charuri, a *devadasi* of Tiruvorriyur Temple was the wife (*agamudaiyal* or *illal*) of one Nagan Perungadan. Paravai Nacchiyar, the *rudra-ganikal* of the Tiruvarur Temple was the wife of St. Sundarar.⁶⁰ It is learnt from his observation that they were not allowed to serve God after their marriage with mortals. Even after their having broken the covenant, they appear to have served God. Rajaraja I and Rajendra I took a few of them as their mistresses.⁶¹ The inscription during the first Rajarajan 31st anniversary of ruling (governance) introduces one *devadasi* Sathuran Sathuri as the wife (*Agamudaiyal*) of Nagan Perun-gadan. H. Krishna Sastri describe the inscriptions matter ‘The fact recorded in No.147 of Appendix-B, VI.2 that the donor a *devaradiyal* or temple girl was the wife (*agamudiyal*) of a certain person, makes it appear that class of women were also married and lived like other family.⁶² During Rajarajan I’s 24th anniversary of his great governance, the inscription at Thirumuthukundram released then introduces one *devadasis* ponnal porkoil Nangai as the wife of Balakesavan. The Nannilam Taluk in Atchutha Mangalam *koyil* Tower inscription mentions a *Devadasi*’s marriage.⁶³

⁵⁹ ARE., of 1912, No. 147.

⁶⁰ *Periyapuram*, Thadut, Vs. 131-132.

⁶¹ K.G. Krishnan, *Devanar Magal, Kalaimagal*, vol. LXXXIII, pt. 493, January, 1973, p.74; AR., for 1920, pt.II, para.20.

⁶² ARE, of 1912, No.147 and para 24 in part II.

⁶³ ARE, of 1993-94, No.294, Ibid. of 1925, No.411.

In the inscriptions of Cōla period the names of the *devadasis* and their sons and daughters names are mentioned. In Kayilaya-natharkoyil of Rishiyur, the *devadasis* Kanga and her daughter Periyanchi Narpathionnayiram-manickam, are noted. In the Ramalingesvara-koyil Marangyur, the temple devadasi *Kolam Kondai* and her daughter Madalvi are noted. In the Annamalaiyar-koyil at Tiruvannamalai the *devadasi* Vambai and her daughter ‘Devi’ Kovanarkula are noted.⁶⁴ One of the inscriptions in the Abhiramesvaran-koyil at Tiruvamattūr mentions that one devadasi from Ekamparanathar-koyil at Kāñcīpuram, donated cows for burning *Sandhi Vilakku* in memorium her daughter’s death.⁶⁵

An inscription from Tiruvorriyur Temple of the time of Virarajendra (A.D.1063-1070) records that it was aimed at perpetuation of the *mangalyam* (marriage badge) of the queen and the long life of the king and their king sons.⁶⁶ Dedication to sacred service was done irrespective of caste and social considerations. In the beginning, the girls were from royal and aristocratic families, *padiyilar* family and Kaikkola.⁶⁷ Some girls came forward by self inspiration to dedicate themselves to sacred service. Royal maids like *Kilanadigal*⁶⁸ the daughter of Sthanu Ravi (A.D. 844-855) took to temple service out of devotion and dedication. They never accepted any remuneration or enjoyed any perquisites.⁶⁹ The *vellattikal* referred to in the Parthibasek-harapuram Copper-plates, reveal that the women from the *Padiyilars* community were free.

Paravai Nacchiyar, the *rudra-ganka* of the Temple of Tiruvarur, came from the *padiyilar* family. Therefore it would appear that in the beginning, caste was not a consideration for the sacred service. Dedication of these girls to temple service

⁶⁴ K. Sivaramalingam, Sivayoganathasvami Temple, Tiruviyalur (Ph.D. Thesis, University of Nadras), 1995, Chap. I.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ ARE., of 1922, No.128.

⁶⁷ ARE, of 1910-11, No.4, No.284.

⁶⁸ Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *Studies in Kerala History*, p.276, SII.vol.II.Pt.iii, p.375.

⁶⁹ Lalitha Nair, *Abolition of devadasi system in Kerala*, JKS., vol VII, pts. 1-4, March, June, September, and December, 1980, p.61.

was done perhaps with the intention of serving the God for fulfilling certain vows of desires or for eking out a living there. Almost all these girls were happy to have the suffix *adigal* with their names.⁷⁰ In later times, all these streams became synonymous with the *devadasis*.

Debut

The debut (*arangerram*) of the *devadasi* was held on an auspicious day, in the presence of a king. Inscriptions generally do not provide many details about this function. Nevertheless, *Cilappatikāram*,⁷¹ pictures out about the debut of Mātavi in the presence of Karikalan, the Cōḷa King. After having garlanded and worshipped the *talaikkōl* (a bamboo stick representing Jayantha, the son of Indra), the dancer entered the stage and gave her first performance in the presence of the king. The king expressed his appraisal and recognition of the expertise of the dancer and ensured her fitness to appear in front of him. He honoured the adept dancer with a gift of 108 golden coins (*kalanju pon*) and a garland of green leaves. She was honoured with the great title *talaikkolli* (the greatest among dancers). The recipient of the honour sent her female attendant outside to offer the garland “for sale”, which fetched another 1008 golden coins. Thy buyer (here Kōvalan) became her parton.⁷² According to *Kamikāgama* instead of the dance debut in front of the king, the *diparadhana nrttanam* (dance during the light worship) for Parameśvara was performed; several inscriptions of the Cōḷa period record the performances of dance (probably dance debut) in front of the Cōḷa kings and their grant of honours to expert *devadasis*.

The *devadasis* were expected to lead a celibate and detached life at least during these years. Early dharmas put on them strict moral continence. The *Matsya Purāṇa* directs them to observe the *vibhuti devadasis* fast. For the apamarga ceremony they were to observe seven day’s fast. During this fast, they were

⁷⁰ Elamkulam P.N.Kunjan Pillai, *Keralacharithrathil Iruttanja Edugal.*, p.78.

⁷¹ *Silappadikaram*, 3:115-175.

⁷² *Ibid.* Adiyarkkunallar Commentary, U.V.Saminathaier edition, pp.116-121.

required to take only one meal a day and that even within the temple premises.⁷³ Paravai Nacchiyar⁷⁴ is said to have observed the fasts (*nonpus*) on those prescribed days. According to *Suprabhedāgama* a *ganika* should dress herself in white, wear white garlands and bedeck with all kinds of jewels and exhibit them during her performance.⁷⁵

Dwelling place

In *Tallicheri* inscriptions of Tanjavur belonging to king Rajaraja I, provides a detail of 400 *devadasis* allotted one house per head in North and South parts of the *Tallicheri*. Those were called as Northern *Siragu* (Northern Rows) and Southern *Siragu* (Southern rows). In the western part they had the dancing centre. An inscription of Rajendra Cōla mentioned that there were 102 *Tallicheris* and among these 49 were in the neighborhood to the temple and the remaining 53 in the outskirts of Tanjavur.

Some other inscriptions also mention about the *Tallicheri*.⁷⁶ The inscription in Kundavai Vinnagar-koyil at Tatapuram indicates the *Tallicheri* at Ravikula Manicka Isvaram and the Adiyappan koyil inscription at Kīlkasakkudi speaks about the *Tirutallicheri*. The inscription in Tanjore Rajarajesvaram mentions the *Tallicheri*.

The *Devadasis* were also allotted living plots in Karuvur, Anilayappar koyil Madai Vilagam, Ratnagiri Sivankoyil, Madai Vilagam, Udumalapet, Sankiramanallu Sivan koyil (Sembian Madevi period), Sakkaraman-nallu Thirugandīśvarar koyil (notes *devadasi* Periyanchi of Periya Nattu Mangai) Madai Vilagam⁷⁷ (1st house), Tiruvalanculi koyil Thirumadai Vilagam (Atkondan Devum Thiruvum Udaiyalum, Kilakkadaiya Nindral – notes *devadasis*). Those who

⁷³ Census of India, 1901, vol. XXVI, pt. p.276,1.

⁷⁴ *Periyapuramam*, Thadut, pp. 334-335.

⁷⁵ K.Sadasivam, op.cit, pp.46-58.

⁷⁶ ARE, of 1919, No.14 ; SII, VII 7:1025:2:69.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

did not live in *Taliccheri* and Madai Vilagam were allotted houses in the neighborhood of temples.

Houses were allotted to the *devadasis* in some temples cities are noted as follows: Umaialvi (Azhalignum Azhagiya Deva *Talaikkoli*) of Tyagarajar koyil of Tiruvarur (lived in sannathi theru vada *Siragu*), Bagagavathi (Enruth Tiruvudaiyal) Nellaiyapparkoyil, Tirunelveli was given a house in (Metri Ezhuntha Theru).⁷⁸ The devadasis of Rajendra Cōlar Vinnagar Alvar in Mannarkoyil were given House *Manais*. Kūttāṭum Devanatchiyar (Olagamulutu-ṭaiyāl) of Tiruvannamalar koyil was given housing place in Kīlateru (East Street). The 200 *Pathiliyars* in Arulalaperumal koil from Kancipuram were given houses.⁷⁹

Devadāsīs under Dedication

The Cōla imperialism appeared favourable to the extension of the *devadasis* system throughout their domination. The Cōlas collected huge booty during their expeditions to the neighborhood and far off lands. Festivals, such as daily, periodical and annual instituted in honour of God or king and were conducted with great pageantry. Tirumaḷikait Tēvar describes the conduct of one such grand car (*tēr*) festival in Cidambaram.⁸⁰ Festivals were the occasions of special worship (*pūjās*), music concerts, dance performances and the recital of sacred hymns in the halls meant for them. Pilgrims and devotees those who paid visits to these sacred centers participated in both the religious and cultural activities.⁸¹ The kings also witnessed and enjoyed various entertainments and conferred honours on experts. They found happy in the company of dancing-girls and took as many as they willed as their mistresses and concubines. All these rituals and festivals offered chances for the artists to exhibit their talents. Hence there arose the need for dedications of more dancing-girls to sacred service. There were two situations in entering into *devadasis* services. One by selling and the other by donating, selling was done in

⁷⁸ Ibid. p.212.

⁷⁹ SII, Vol XXII No. 600 ; ARE, of 1927, No. 35,36, SII, 14:132 ; 8:112 ; ARE, of 1919, No. 417.

⁸⁰ *Tiruvisaippa*, 2:4.

⁸¹ ARE, 1936-37, p.70.

two ways one by self-selling the other one was sold by others. Apart from these, there were some *devadasis* who were appointed in the circumstance of necessity inducement.⁸² Voluntary dedication to sacred service was considered meritorious. For instance, an inscription of the 23rd year of Chola Keraladeva⁸³ records that some girls voluntarily entered temple service in perpetuity. In A.D. 948 one mediator (*madhyastha*) is said to have donated three of his slaves to a temple.⁸⁴ In Andhra Country, an epigraph of Velpura states that one *mahamandalesvara* (provincial head) donated Bhandaramu Akkama as *sani (devadasi)* to the Temple of Ramesvara. Similarly, Rashtrakuta king Dhruva's inscriptions also mention such donations. In addition, the kings have also appointed many *devadasis* on their own will and wish. A record of the 27th year of Kongu Chola king Vikrama registers the appointment of girls to a temple.⁸⁵ Similarly, appointments of *devadasis* were made in the temples of the contemporary period in the Chalukyan and Orissan countries.⁸⁶ Several records of this period makes under royal directions.

According to another record of A.D. 1001,⁸⁷ though the method of dedication appears to be voluntary and terms were liberal, some family members including women were forced to accept bondage. All of them could not have voluntarily accepted temple service.⁸⁸

Non-voluntary dedication meant object surrender i.e., a kind of forced servitude. Once they surrendered themselves to sacred service, they became the property of the temple. As a result, many new features such as sales (purchase), sale-deeds, branding, assigning duties and purchase value had crept in. The cause

⁸² ARE, of 1925, No's. 216, 217, 218, 219; Ibid. of 1913, No.80; SII vol XIII, No.153; Ibid. vol XVII, No.204; ARE., of 1921, No. 230.

⁸³ ARE, 1925, No. 76.

⁸⁴ ARE, 1936-37, No.149A.

⁸⁵ ARE, 1922, No.594.

⁸⁶ Ibid. of 1920-21, No.658; El., vol. XIII, p.36; SII. vol. VI, p.205.

⁸⁷ Ibid. of 1910, No, 274.

⁸⁸ K.A.Nilakanta sastri, *The Cholas*, p.556.

of slavery was not 'purely religious'.⁸⁹ According to a study made by some foreign scholars, slavery means economic, social and political deprivation, legal impotence and oppressions. Inscriptions of this period refer to poor economic conditions, such as poverty, famines, drought, debt and desertion, as the causes of dedication. Because of the social evil of dowry, some others entered temple service. It helped the poor and downtrodden women, instead of taking to the streets, sought refuge in the temples. An inscription states that a certain mediator, named Chandrasekhara of Nandivarman-mangalam, sold his three women as slaves to the temple of Vayalur⁹⁰ in 948 A.D. According to another record two women sold seven persons including themselves to a temple.

The episode of St.Sundarar confirms the prevalence of the practice of the traditional slavery in medieval Tamil Nadu. To be a slave in perpetuity for generations was considered meritorious.⁹¹ Those who served temples by virtue of their family tradition were called *aḍiyār*. An unpublished inscription from the Tenkarai temple gives an instance of hereditary service of dancing-girls. Similarly records,⁹² from the Deccan also register the hereditary service of 300 *sanis* in Somesvara Temple. An epigraph dated A.D. 1237⁹³ gives a list of slaves numbering more than one hundred. They were made over to the temple by a royal order by purchases from several people and getting gifts from private individuals. The circumstances of their sale and prices paid for them are not known. Inscriptions also refer to partial servitude. For instance, a record of A.D. 1049⁹⁴ calls one Chaturari Chaturi, a *devadasi* of the Tiruvorriyur Temple, as the *akamudaiyāl* (wife) of one Nagan Perungadan. The grounds of traditional slavery appear to be more on economic reasons than religious.⁹⁵

⁸⁹ A.Swaminathan, *Adimaikal (slaves) in the Chola Temples and Maṭhas*, BITC, Madras, January, 1978, p.33.

⁹⁰ ARE, 1925, pt.1,I, para.18.

⁹¹ Ibid. of 1922, No.19.

⁹² Ibid. of 1920-21, No.744.

⁹³ Ibid. of 1917, No.223; AR., for 1918, pt, ii, para 41.

⁹⁴ Ibid. of 1912, No.147.

⁹⁵ AR., of 1925, pt.ii.

Duties of *devadāsīs*

The *devadāsīs* performed certain duties in the temples and in recognition of their services they were paid some rewards which varied from temple to temple and from time to time. These included some prestigious and menial services as well. They showed much devotion and dedication in doing their services. In certain respects nature of their duties decided their status in the temples as well as the society at large. Singing and dancing were their common duties in temples. In this respect alone, the duties of *devadāsīs* of Rajarajesvaram were akin to those enjoined on their counterparts in other temples.⁹⁶ Rajaraja I's inscription of A.D. 1014 specifies singing and dancing as their daily duties.⁹⁷ Karuvūr Tēvar's hymn on *Tiruppuvananthar* confirms this.⁹⁸ As these are part of temple rituals they had canonical sanction.⁹⁹ The *devadāsīs* of Saivite temples recited the hymns (*Tiruppadiham*, i.e. *Devaram*, *Tiruvacakam* and *Tiruvempavai*). The *emperumanadiyar* of Vaisnavite temples recited hymns from *Divyaprabanandham*.¹⁰⁰

An inscription of the time of Gandarāditya¹⁰¹ from Konerirajapuram refers to the various services, such as fetching flowers, stringing them into garlands, sweeping and smearing the temple premises with cowdung and chanting the *tiruppadiyam* hymns. A record of Virarajendra¹⁰² from Tiruvorriyur states sixteen female hymns in classical style (agamarga). According to Sekkilar¹⁰³ the melodious sound of chanting the sacred hymns filled the air in the Tiruvarur temple. Endowments were instituted in the temples from the time of Parantaka I (A.D. 907-

⁹⁶ K.S.Ramachandran, *On the Term Nakkam Occurring in an inscription of RajaRaja-I* JAHRS., vol. XXXV, (1975-76), p.189.

⁹⁷ SII. vol. II, pt.iii, No.66.

⁹⁸ *Tiruvisaippa*, 7:4.

⁹⁹ T.Ganapati Sastri (ed.). *Isanasivagurudeva Paddhati*. Trivandrum Sanskrit Series, No.69, pp.79-80.

¹⁰⁰ K.R.Srinivasa Aiyer, *Inscriptions in the Pudukottai State*, pt. I, No.90.

¹⁰¹ SII. vol. III, pt. III, No.151A; Ibid. vol.IV. No.558; ARE, of 1949-50 No.365; Ibid. of 1913, No.80.

¹⁰² Ibid. of 1912, No.128; AR., for 1913, pt. 11, para 6.

¹⁰³ *Periyapuramam, Tirunagaracchirappu*, V.8; ARE., of 1917, No.321.

955) for this specific purpose.¹⁰⁴ According to an inscription of A.D.1008,¹⁰⁵ they were directed to sing and dance during the hunting festival. *Rauravāgama* states that the *devadasis* accompanied the temple car (*tēr*) during the processions. In Cidambaram (Tillai) during the great festival of car processions, the air was filled with music and the jingle of the dancer's anklets. *Devadasis* evinced interest in painting and other allied arts. Antal says that those women, who gave up their souls to Tirumāl, drew beautiful pictures in front of their residences. Edward Carpenter says that they used to “decorate the floor with *kolam* (artistic designs) drawn in rice colour.”

It is learnt that the *devadasis* took active part in dramatic performances in temples also. Some temples even had troupes of dramatists perhaps including some *devadasis*. Dramas were enacted during the annual festivals in temples. An inscription records that Rajendra I made endowments in A.D.1056 to enact the Rajarajesvara drama in Rajarajesvaram at Tanjore.¹⁰⁶

Devadasis were also entrusted with the duty of looking after the flower-gardens (*tirunandavanam*) in the temples. An inscription of the time of Gandarāditya (A.D.949-957) from the Valarmatisvara Temple, confirms this.¹⁰⁷ Pattiattu Pillaiyar says that they fetched flowers and strung garlands.¹⁰⁸ It is evident from the story of Vipranarayana or Tondaratipoti Alvar that the *devadasis* watered the flower garden, fetched flowers, strung them into garlands and guarded the gardens in the absence of the devotees in Srirangam. Some were attached to the temple granary. Some others carried the scepter staffs (*kambha*) some others played a prominent role in the *tiruvandikkāppu* (sacred evening worship performed to drive away evil spirits) rite in Tiruvarur and Srirangam Temples.¹⁰⁹ They also stood

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. of 1923, No.176; Ibid. of 1918, No.349.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. of 1919, No.14.

¹⁰⁶ SII. vol. II. PP.306-307.

¹⁰⁷ K.R.Srinivasa Aiyer, op.cit., No.30; SII. vol. III, pt.iii, No. 151A.

¹⁰⁸ *Tiruvidaimarudur Mummanikovai.*, II, 57-59.

¹⁰⁹ ARE, 1917, No's, 519, 545,556 and 595.

as security to some deeds in the temples. Ramanuja, the Vaisnava saint, introduced women servants including *devadasis* to the Srirangam Temple.

Devadasis were listed in the third group of the “Udaiyavar Code.” Among their menial services, mention is to be made of husking paddy,¹¹⁰ carrying the light,¹¹¹ cleaning the rice required for offerings,¹¹² cleaning the kitchen vessels,¹¹³ bringing water for worship,¹¹⁴ decorating the surroundings, looking after the perpetual lamps,¹¹⁵ washing the clothes of the deities¹¹⁶ and waiting upon the Goddess with fly-whisk on occasions when she was installed during the day.¹¹⁷ They also carried the *tiruvalatti* (*karpuram* lamps) and *tirucchulam* (the sacred trident).¹¹⁸ Some of them prepared the scented powder and burnt incense;¹¹⁹ others carried the sacred flowers and ash plates.¹²⁰

Rewards

The girls thus dedicated as devadasis to deities had to perform certain duties in the temples. Sage calls the services rendered by these girls as *thondu seidal* (doing service) and *panikal paviludal*¹²¹ (doing duties). Tirumankai Alvar refers to such a state as “becoming slave to God.”¹²² The *Eiyarkonkalikkamanayanar* – *Purāṇam* praises such services as ‘worshipful’.¹²³ The major duties of the *devadasis* of early periods were mainly of dancing, singing, reciting the *Tiruppadikam* (Saivite hymns) or *Tiruppasuram* (Vaisnavite hymns) and cleaning the temple premises. The *Periyapuram* tells that Paravai Nacchiyar used to dance

¹¹⁰ SII. vol.IV, No.558, TAS., vol. V, pt. 1, No.24.

¹¹¹ SII, vol. IV, No.132, TAS., vol. V, pt.1, No.24.

¹¹² SII, vo.VII, No.458; ARE, of 1912, No.122.

¹¹³ SII, vol.VII, No.485.

¹¹⁴ *Koil Olungu*, pp.95-96.

¹¹⁵ ARE.,of 1906, No.248.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. of 1916, No.587.

¹¹⁷ SITI, vol. I No.525; AR., for 1913, pt.ii, para 67.

¹¹⁸ PSI, No.162.

¹¹⁹ ARE, of 1917. No.519.

¹²⁰ SITI, vol. I, No.525.

¹²¹ *Appar Puranam*, 169:4, 170:4, 171:3, 172:1.

¹²² *Tirukkuruntandakam*, 5 and 10.

¹²³ *Periyapuram*, *Eyarkon*, v. 225.

in the Tiruvolakkamandapa of the Tiruvavur Temple.¹²⁴ Karuvur Tevar also says that these women performed dances to the tune of music played in the Temple of Tiruppuvananathar.¹²⁵

The *Periyapurānam*, states that on all festive occasions, the *devadasis* performed singing, dancing and also playing on the musical instruments to the merriment of the people.¹²⁶ They are said to have danced and sung while the deity Vitvitakaperumal was taken out in procession through the streets on the *Tiruvadirai*, December–January day.¹²⁷ Among the menial services, mention is to be made of sweeping, mopping the floor clean with water and cowdung and decorating the temple precincts. In literature and inscriptions, such acts are known as *tiruvālagitudal* (sweeping) and *tirumelugitudal*, (smearing). The *Tiruvacagam* lays stress on garland making, sweeping, smearing and dancing as the duties of devadasis. A record of this period informs us that the devadasis of the Tiruvallam Temple picked up flowers and strung them into garlands.

In recognition of their various services rendered to temples, the girls were fed in the temples. Inscriptions have also recorded the kind of allowances and the mode of payment. Allowances were defrayed by means of cooked rice balls or grant of paddy or land. The accruing income of grant-in-aid was used for this purpose. An inscription of Dharmamahadevi mentions that the *adigalmar* and the *kuttigal* of Mukteswara Temple were paid some remuneration. *Tavasigal* (mendicants) of the temple were directed to feed them.¹²⁸ Another record registers that four hundred *kadi*¹²⁹ of paddy were allotted towards the upkeep the standard of the lives of the servants of the temple at Tiruvallam.¹³⁰ Another record states that

¹²⁴ *Idem*, v. 271.

¹²⁵ *Tiruvisaippa, Tiruppuvanam*, 4.

¹²⁶ *Periyapurānam*, *Taṭuttāṭkoṇṭa Purāṇam*, v. 279.

¹²⁷ *Periyapurānam*, vol. III, pt. 1, 21:1495.

¹²⁸ C. Minakshi, *op. cit.*, pp. 214.

¹²⁹ A measure of capacity for grain. (Tamil Lexicon, vol. II, pt,1, p.855, 1 kadi = 4ma, 400 kadi = 1600 ma; 1ma is a land measure equal to 13/40 of an acre. See Lexicon of Travancore Inscriptions, Trivandrum, 1947, p.103.

¹³⁰ SII, vol, III, pt, 1, No. 43.

the servants were paid from the income accruing from a grant-in-aid.¹³¹ A record of the ninth century A.D. says that a king entrusted some lands with the members of the assembly of Parthibasekharapuram for meeting the expenses of a devadasis of the temple.¹³² In some temples they were granted some *kalams*¹³³ of paddy for their up keep.¹³⁴ These show that they performed both the prestigious and menial services. The recognition and rewards given to them depended largely on the nature of their service and position of the temple concerned.

Service Conditions

When the number of *devadasis* increased, there arose the need for regulating their qualifications, service conditions, duties and rewards. Rajaraja I, who appointed various categories of temple servants, made special mention of proper qualifications such as integrity and discipline. In the case of the *devadasis* he laid down certain service conditions which were applicable to all categories of temple servants. The specific qualification mentioned in the inscription is this:¹³⁵ (are to be honest). *Narttaratnavali* of Jayasenapati prescribes certain qualifications to be a dancing girl. It says that she should know all subjects of music and must be a musician herself. She must know all aspects of dance and must be young and beautiful. She should never be lazy; but, must constantly be practising her arts.¹³⁶ The fact mentioned in *Narttaratnavali* is not applicable to all grades of *devadasis*. The Rajarajesvaram record of Rajaraja I states that service in the temples was to a great extent of hereditary¹³⁷ but it did not confer the right to work without qualification.¹³⁸ In case of death or migration, the immediate descendant was authorised to do service. Even in this case too, if one did not possess the required qualification, she or he was not authorised to perform the duty.

¹³¹ ARE, of 1901, No. 303.

¹³² TAS, vol, 1, p. 9.

¹³³ *Kalam* = a measure of capacity (*Tamil Lexicon*, vol. II, pt.I, p.778). See also *Tolkāppiyam*, *Eḷuttu*, 169.

¹³⁴ SII, vol. III, pt. No. 151A.

¹³⁵ SII, vol. II, pt.III, No.66, V.

¹³⁶ *Narttaratnavali*, 1.7.

¹³⁷ SII, vol. II, pt.III, No.66.

¹³⁸ R. Nagaswamy, SATLS, p.136.

However, they were given the right to choose a duly qualified person and get the duty done through her to him. This provision was made to ensure service security for the descendants of the temple servants. If qualified persons were not available, the temple authorities reserved the right to appoint newly a qualified person.¹³⁹ This clearly shows the emperor's interest in the welfare and security of the families of the temple servants; at the same time, there was no question of any hereditary right without due qualification.¹⁴⁰ It is reported that these stipulations were rigorously put into practice.¹⁴¹ Records are not available to confirm whether Rajaraja's successors followed the stipulations to the letter and spirit.

In most cases arrangements were made to keep the *devadasis* in tax-free apartments constructed around the temple. The Konerirajapuram inscription of Sembyan Mahadevi records; "The temple quarter (*madavilagam*) in which the temple servant live (is) the old tax-free *devadana* land."¹⁴² Usually, their living areas were called Cheris.¹⁴³ An inscription calls one such Cheri as *mattavanaccheri*¹⁴⁴ (living area of devadasis). The inscriptions call those girls who lived in these Cheris as *Taliccheri p-pendugal*.¹⁴⁵ The Rajarajesvaram inscription to Rajaraja I specify the number of apartments sanctioned to each girl.¹⁴⁶ The situation, direction and the streets of the houses are clearly mentioned. A number of records of this period give information about provision made in other temples.¹⁴⁷ In some respects, these are compared with the residences (*kannimadams*) of the nuns

¹³⁹ SII. vol.II, pt.III, No.66.

¹⁴⁰ R.Nagaswamy, op.cit.,pp.65 and 137.

¹⁴¹ Ibid. p.137.

¹⁴² SII. vol.III, pt.III, No.151A.

¹⁴³ SII. vol. II, pt.III, No.66.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Vol. III, pt. I, No.15. SII. vol. I, No.145, SIII, Vol.III, pt.I, No. 20, Ibid. Vol. V, No. 251.

¹⁴⁵ SII. vol. II, pt.III, No.66.

¹⁴⁶ R.Nagaswamy, TPKK, pp.56-89.

¹⁴⁷ SII. vol V, No.251; Ibid. vol. III, pt, I, No.26.

of medieval Churches in Europe. In those days, these streets maintained some decency, which was lost during the days of the Nayakas and the Mahrattas.¹⁴⁸

Thus the Cōla imperialism helped the extension of the *devadasi* system throughout their domain. Rajaraja I and Rajendra I are said to have extended the system to its neighborhood also. With the intention of transferring one of the 'sixteen fold ceremonious rites' (*Sodasopacaras*), Rajaraja I transferred the services of four hundred dancing-girls to his newly built Temple at Tanjore. He settled them in tax-free quarters around the temple meant for that purpose and instituted officials for watch and ward. He regularised their service conditions and made it hereditary. By transferring them to; Rajarajesvaram, he centralised the system to a greater extent. By making their service strengthened traditional occupation. This, in the long run, helped the emergence of the devadasis caste with its rights to profession, marriage and succession. Nevertheless, the temple building activities of the Cholas went unaffected and festivals in them increased day by day.

Working Situations: (*Pani Sūlal*)

Those who were wellversed and skilled in singing and dancing with inspiration were arranged for learning singing and dancing. In temples there were *Panar* to teach songs, *Nattuvar* for teaching dances, including *Thalaikozhiyar* *Koothasanars* were available. Those devadasis having not learnt singing and dancing and those who passed the young stage were assigned to perform other works pertaining to temple service. These facts are revealed from the inscription found in Tiru Vetriyur and Kulathoor.¹⁴⁹

Under the *Devaradiyar* cadre, there were both male and female sexes. But in the male cadre they were less in number. All the facilities such as food, cloth and Shelter were provided by the temple administration in order to make up the

¹⁴⁸ K.M.Venkataramayya, *Administration and Social Life Under the Mahratta Rulers of Thajai*, (TI), Tanjore, 1985, p.4.

¹⁴⁹ ARE., of 1912, No. 195, 208, 212, IPS, No. 162.

expenditure incurred on them and their legal heirs also. *Pati-ilar*, *Tali-ilar* and *Taliccheri devadasis* were appointed by the king and those were under cadres just above the other *devadasis*. An inscription of Rājarāja at Thathapuram reveals that there was one festival called *Vettai Thiruvilā* in Kundavai-vinnagam-koyil. That festival was celebrated with gaiety and grandeur, and 32 *Taliccheri Devadasis* from Ravikula Manikka Isvaram koyil performed the singing and dancings. From this one, one can understand that the devadasis belonging to one temple participated in the *Vilās* (festivals) celebrated in other temples.

The inscriptions in *Taliccheri* of Tanjavur Rajarajesvaram and Vadakailasam¹⁵⁰ koyil in Tiruvaiyaru Ayyarappa koyil premises tells the fact that the *Devadasis* were given house facility and 100 kalam paddy per year livelihood and reimbursement for other expenditures. *Pathiliyar* were called as *Thalaikoḷis*. They performed their dancing only in the courts and temples. They were for special performances and the *Thalilayar* for common performances.

Service Security

In *Taliccheri* inscription, it is known that if in case of one *devadasis* (performing singing and dancing) either might have died or migrated to other nation. Her close relative who had both the talents of singing and dancing was appointed in her place and was permitted all the benefits that she enjoyed. In the event of no such relationship was available there would be new appointment with only paddy as payment and not with other benefits.¹⁵¹ The same inscription says that, during festivals in Vilvarayan Isvarar koyil at Nallur a devadasi, Udai Nachiyar alias Kulothunga Chola Manickam who performed Kakkaiyadi, and recited *Tiruvempavai*, died. As there were no relative for her to be appointed in her place, one *Devadasi*, Poomal the daughter of Porkoil Nangai was appointed in her place.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ SII, Vol. II, No. 66, P.2.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. p.208.

¹⁵² ARE, of 1940, No. 41,160.

Supervision

The Cōlas instituted official supervision to watch the activities of the *devadasis*. Their day to day duties were strictly supervised to guard against dereliction of duty, intrigues, misbehavior and misdeed. In certain cases, a steward was appointed to maintain discipline and also to attend to their welfare. The official supervision in Tanjore was known as *nāyakanseiyya*¹⁵³ (to supervise). The record further states that the four hundred *talichcherip-pendugal* were under the overall supervision of two supervisors, named Savur Parañjothi and Govinda Somanathan,¹⁵⁴ in the Bankapur Temple the steward ranked equal to the dance-master and each of them received five *mattars* (an unknown measure) of land. In Tanjore also the steward was kept on par with the dance-master, but below the rank of a *gānapati* (music-master) and above the rank of a *devadasis*.¹⁵⁵ In some temples official supervision was taken up by the *sabha* and the *ūr*. An inscription of A.D. 1002 states that the servants of the temple were supervised to ensure whether they fulfilled their obligations or not.¹⁵⁶ The Official supervisions were not strictly enforced during the days of the later Cōlas. It is evident from an inscription that the temple slaves defied the orders of the *sthānattar* (temple administrative officer) of the temple and ignored their regular duties.¹⁵⁷

Social status

The Ratnagiri inscriptions¹⁵⁸ mentions that the *devadasis* were given due respect in the temples where they rendered service. In society too, they were equally treated with others. They contributed donations to temples like others used to do.

¹⁵³ R. Nagaswamy, TPKK, 1.3. P.95.

¹⁵⁴ SII. vol.II, pt,III, No.66.

¹⁵⁵ R. Nagaswamy, op.cit., pp.89-95.

¹⁵⁶ ARE.,of 1910, No.274.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. of 1926, No.94.

¹⁵⁸ ARE., of 1914, No. 172.

An inscription says that Perur Kottīsvārar temple *devadasis* were offered food. The food supplier to *devadasis* was Thiraiyan Devarkandan, Thanguvarana Uttama Chola Valrathrayan during the time of Rajarajan I.¹⁵⁹ Vishnavarthanader of Vengi donated liberally to Vadakailasam, Ayyarappakoil Valagam in Thiruvaiyaru. This donated property was arranged to keep under the responsibility of Nakkan Arangamana Iyyankonda Chola Thalaikoli, Nakkan Poomiyana Paramakka Vidangathalaikoli, Nakkan Chola Vitchathriyana Olagamadevi Thalaikoli and Nakkan Pavalakurana Mathurantaka Thalaikoli that formed a committee.¹⁶⁰ The dancers had got faith and respect in the official circle of the government. This is defined in an inscription Sivankoyil, Tiruccemponpalli.¹⁶¹

This same inscription further adds that the king Rājāditya was governing the country. There were Nayanars copper statues (*ceppu tirumeni*) that were taken to keep them in Tiruvidaichuli koyil for safety. Once again they were brought back to the same temple, i.e. Sivan-koyil in Tiruchemponpalli. To celebrate this noble deed, it was decided to conduct a festival for which one VEDIYAN Tiruvayil (VEDIYAN entrance Arch) was proposed to be constructed. This was the request made by Akkoor Nadalvan, a *devadasis*.¹⁶² Besides, due to a storm the temple and its neighborhood got damaged. For repairing and other works Akkoor Nadalvan requested the *devadasis* to help the rebuilding process by their participation and contribution in renovation works. The inscription in Mūlesvārar-koyil in Bagur says that the *Devadasis* had the right to punish the erring officers who violated the oaths and trust on the temple donations. The same inscription defines that the shepherds (*Idaiyars* or *Ayars*) had established one trust (*Arakkattalai*). According to that one sheep will have to be given to the temple if anybody from their community *Kattilerinal* and if anyone shepherd from other village *Kattilerinal* they will give

¹⁵⁹ SII, vol. V, No.231, Ibid. vol. VIII, No. 40.

¹⁶⁰ SII, vol. V, No. 520.

¹⁶¹ ARE., of 1925, No. 171.

¹⁶² K. Sivaramalingam, *op. cit.*, Chap. I.

one sheep to this shepherd.¹⁶³ If this rule was violated they will be fined two sheep to be given to the temple by the justice committee framed by village *Ganamakkal* and the *devadasis*. One *devadasi* Aya Thiru Nuttruvana Manickam belonging to Sundara Varada Perumal koyil in Uthrameru constructed the compound wall and the stage for *abhiseka* of this temple.

The same temple *Devadasi* Siyanat Sri Vaishnava Mannikam got the honour of car pulling for her *tirupani* service.¹⁶⁴ There was one *Devadasi*, Uruvakkina *Talaikoḷi* and she was noted for *Agamarkkam*. The people were heart-moved and highly respected her with high esteem for her devotion. When the king Rajaraja bought 60 veli lands from Manali the people requested and appealed to the king to ‘Christen’ the place as Uruvakkina Nallur, and was done in accordance with their wishes. There was one *devadasi*¹⁶⁵ in Nannilam and a place was named after her as ‘*Kūtti Porattiyar*’.¹⁶⁶

According to Vadakadu’s inscriptions, a *devaradiyar* denoted lamps to the temple and additionally, it is inscribed that nobody could not find fault with her noble services of lamp burning. The lamps then had the names as follows: *Pakal Vilakku*. The lamp burning at the *sandhya* time of the evening was called *Sandhya Vilakku*. The lamp burning in the presence both the sun and the moon was called *Chandrathithaval*. The lamp burning till the reign of the stars and moon was called as *asandradara*.¹⁶⁷ From the ‘Udaiyarkudi’ inscription it is known that the donors gifted the *vilakkus* and the allied expenditures, were given to the business people (*Viyaparikal*) and *Variyattars*.¹⁶⁸ From the words above inscriptions it is clear that

¹⁶³ SII, vol. VII, No.804.

¹⁶⁴ ARE, of 1923, No.172, 180,183.

¹⁶⁵ K.A.Padmavathi, *Tamil Arachiyin puthiya Ellaigal* p.95.

‘,t;tiff;F Fiw nrhd;dhu; cz;lhfpy; ,tu;fs;
Rf Jf;fq;fSf;F nry;yhnjhopRf; fltjhfTk; ,g;gb
rk;kjpp;J ,it jPI;Lu; FLj;njhc; ,d;dapdhu;
nfhapy; njt ubnahk;’.

¹⁶⁶ ARE, of 1912, No.211; *Nannilam kalvetugal* 254, 257, ARE., of 1914, No. 94.

¹⁶⁷ R.K.Alagesan, *Kalvetugal kattum kalai sorkal*, 2004, pp.50, 51.

¹⁶⁸ ARE., of 1920, No. 573

the Mandradiyars took the responsibilities of lamps-*Dharma* (*Vilakku–dharma*) and supervision of lamp burning.

Remuneration

In recognition of their service, the *devadasis* were remunerated. The payments depended on the wealth and fame of the temples which employed them and also on the kings who patronized them. In some temples the wage paid was very meagre, but in others it was lucrative. Remuneration was paid in kind and cash.¹⁶⁹ It included cooked rice balls, paddy, clothes, lands (even villages) and other items. Allowance in cash was made for the purchase of dresses and meeting certain incidental expenses. It amounted to a few gold coins per annum. Payments for the work done in temples were mainly in kind. The quantity of grains given was decided at the time of the grant or it varied according to harvest in the land gifted for such purposes.¹⁷⁰ The lands gifted for a particular service in a temple were cultivated by tenants who were expected to ensure the quality of grain stipulated to the temple servants.¹⁷¹

Payment

In the Rajarajesvaram, the *Taliccheri devadasis* were given one-*veli* land producing one *kalam* paddy equivalent, *Pathiliyars*. In the Ayyarappar koyil Vilagam, they were given $\frac{3}{4}$ *veli* and 3 *mā* (3 kh) land by Rajaraja I, to each head. Rajendra I lessened this measure to $\frac{1}{2}$ *veli* and 1 *ma* (1 kh) respectively. It is interesting to note that the *devadasis* of Sivankoyil in Ilavanasur were given a whole village, Rajarajamangalam.¹⁷²

kd;whb fyidahk; FUj;j rhtu; %thnguhL
njhz;Zhw;whW ,e; njhz;Zhw;whW MF nfhz;L
re;jpuhjpi;jty; tpsf;F xd;W vupg;ngkh; R+Nshk;
,k;kd;whb fyid nahk;.

¹⁶⁹ R. Nagaswamy, SATLS., p.138. Also V.Sp. Manickam (ed.). *Glimpses of Tamilology*, Tiruchirappali, 1968, p.31.

¹⁷⁰ R. Nagaswamy, SATLS., p.138.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p.139; SIL. vol.II, pt.iii, No.66.

¹⁷² K. Sivaramalingam, *op. cit.*, Chap. I.

One of the inscriptions of the time of Sembian Mahadevi from Konerirajapuram details the grant of paddy and land given as remuneration. The record runs as follows: “For sixty-seven *kalam* (one) tuni and one padakku of paddy each year at three nali every day for each of three (servants) who picked up flowers for the sacred temple and three who string them together, (was assigned land) at Pungudi (measuring) one half, one-eightieth and one by three hundred and twentieth. For forty-five *kalam* of paddy each year at four nali per day to each of three (servants who sweep and smear with cowdung the sacred (temple), (was assigned land) at Pungudi.

Rajaraja I simplified the pay structure of the temple servants of Rajarajesvaram. His inscription dated A.D.1014¹⁷³ elaborates his assignment of the produce of certain land to a number of temple servants including four hundred *Taliccherippendugal*.

Grant of Privileges

In recognition of their commendable service, the *devadasis* were granted certain privileges. An inscription states that when the temple authorities signed a document with a certain officer a *devadasi* was asked to be a surety.¹⁷⁴ They considered waving of *camaram* (fly-whisk) before the image during car procession a great privilege.¹⁷⁵ For having installed some sacred images in the temples they were granted certain privileges.¹⁷⁶ According to an inscription, an image of women in a temple pillar was called after a *devadasis* as Bhogamattal.¹⁷⁷ Their beneficinations have gone in records as *tevadiyal kattalai*¹⁷⁸ (order of beneficiation by a *devadasi*).

¹⁷³ SII, vol. II, pt. III, No.66.

¹⁷⁴ ARE., of 1918, No.1; PSL, No.176; IA., vol.XIII, 1884, p.170.

¹⁷⁵ ARE, for 1923, pt. II, para.41.

¹⁷⁶ ARE, of 1911, No.94., *Nannilam Kalvetukal*, No.134/1977.

¹⁷⁷ ARE, of 1927, No.166.

¹⁷⁸ SII, vol. XIX, No.228.

A selected few of them received royal protection, patronage and treatment. They were permitted to have the prefix *Nakkan* (Lord Siva) with their names. Some of them named themselves after saints, others were happy to have the names or surnames of kings. Highly accomplished and expert dancing girls were the recipients of high sounding titles like *talaikoli* (expert dancer who possessed the *talaikoli*, the mark of her expertise in dance) (Plate III) and *santik-kutti*¹⁷⁹ (recipient of an honour for having enacted one of the many kinds of dances called *santik-kuttu*). Having witnessed the dance performances of one Uravakkinatalaikkoyil, a Cōla king was pleased to order the renaming of villages as Uravakkinanallur.¹⁸⁰ Impressed by their personalities and artistic attainments many of them were taken to royal concubineage.¹⁸¹ A record Tiruvannamalai Temple says that one Konakkanar, the daughter of a certain Manikkattar, was a concubine of one Vanako-varaiyar.¹⁸²

Under Rajaraja I, Paravai Nacchiyar rose to the semi-divine position. Similarly, under Rajendra I, Nangai Paravai rose to that exalted position. Nangai Paravai, the *anukki* (personal attendant) attracted the attention of the monarch by her several religious beneficiations.¹⁸³ Among them were the installation of two *pāvaivilakus* (women statues holding lamps), erection of a stone temple in the place of a mud temple and presentation of a large quantity of gold ornaments to the God and Goddess of Tiruvarur Temple. The *pāvaivilakus* commemorate the place where Rajendra I and Nangai Paravai stood and worshipped the Goddess in the temple. Their images in the worshipping pose are also there. Impressed by the activities, Rajendra I allowed her to sit near him in the royal chariot during a procession around the temple.¹⁸⁴ The images of Nangai Paravai have been concentrated in

¹⁷⁹ SII, Vol. XVII, No's, 455,593 and 606; PSI, No. 128 and 275; ARE., of 1914, No. 253.

¹⁸⁰ SIII, vol. I, No.520; ARE., of 1912, No.211.

¹⁸¹ SII, vol XIX, No.283; TAS., vol. VI, pp.14-20.

¹⁸² SII, vol. 1, No.113.

¹⁸³ ARE, of 1918, No.10; Ibid. of 1919, No's 679 and 68; Ibid. of 1917, No.320.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. of 1919, No. 680, Ibid. of 1917, No.320.

other temples with royal honour.¹⁸⁵ Under their successors, both Paravai Nacchiyar and Nangai Paravai were equality revered. Newly built shrines were called after them.¹⁸⁶ New *pujas* were instituted in their honour¹⁸⁷ and new and old villages were named after them.¹⁸⁸

The *Devadasis* performed multifaceted works that are entirely converged in cultural and spiritual services. It is clearly known that their lives too lie in two strata. Those who were in the upper stratum, lead prestigious life having paid grants-in-aid with honours and privileges too. The low stratum was less paid as well as did only manual works with daily allowances, No doubt this show the gradation in the *Devadasi* system.

Taliccheri

Several inscriptions of this period bear evidence to the wide prevalence of the system. An inscription of A.D. 875¹⁸⁹ states that a certain devadasi donated some amount of gold for a perpetual lamp (*nondavilaku*) to the God Tenkilayattu Mahadevar. Another record of A.D. 923 (924)¹⁹⁰ refers to some Nāṭṭiyattar, perhaps a troupe of dancers and dramatists. Another record of A.D.948 registers that a *madhyastha* (mediator) donated three of his slaves to the service of Paramesvararkoyil. Yet one more inscription of A.D.958¹⁹¹ mentions one devadasi named Tiruppulippagavan alias Nrita Vitangi.

According to a famous inscription of Rajaraja I from Rajarajesvaram of A.D.1014.¹⁹² Rajaraja I is said to have transferred some four hundred *Taliccheri p-pendugal* (women of the temple quarters) from various temples of his dominion to

¹⁸⁵ SII, vol. VII, No.485; Ibid. vol. II, pt, ii, No.38.

¹⁸⁶ SITI, vol. 1, No. 22A; SII. vol. XIII, No.24; ARE., of 1917, No. 320.

¹⁸⁷ SII, vol. V, No.533; SII, vol. II, No. 896.

¹⁸⁸ ARE, of 1917, No's 319 and 327.

¹⁸⁹ SII, Vol. XIII, No.88.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. of No.695.

¹⁹¹ ARE, of 1936-37, No.149A.

¹⁹² Ibid. of 1909, No.370.

serve the God Rajarajesvaram. Paragraphs 3 to 402 contain a list of the names of these girls thus transferred and settled in the name of the temple. To the name of each girl is prefixed the name of the temple or village to which she had already belonged to. On the basis of such references, a list of the total number of temples in existence prior to the construction of Rajarajesvaram can be drawn.

A number of Siva temples, which find mention in the *Periyapuram* and a number of Vishnu temples, which are referred to in the *Nalayiraprabandham*, are recorded, thus, in the inscription.¹⁹³ Further a list of those temples which provided these girls can also be prepared. As many as 91 temples located in 51 different places contributed these temple-girls, some temples deputing as many as five to eight girls.¹⁹⁴

Cheramangai and Nakkan Panchavan Madevi were the first and the last of the 400 dancing-girls thus transferred to Rajarajesvaram at Tiruvaiyaru and Kotturkkunavadisvaram respectively. *Cheramangai's* transfer from Tiruvaiyaru confirms St. Sambandar's observation that dancing-girls came around the temple singing and dancing.¹⁹⁵ Some of them are said to have been transferred to *tentali* (southern temple and *vataatali* northern temple) of Palayarai¹⁹⁶ near Kumbhakonam. Two dancing-girls appear to have come from the Temple of Puhar. It seems they were the descendants of Matavi of *Silappadikaram*, fame.¹⁹⁷ Another girl, named Tiruvennaval was probably transferred from Tiruvanaikakoil¹⁹⁸ (Jambukesvaram) near Tirucchirapalli. About forty four girls previously attached to the various shrines of Tiruvarur, are found mentioned in the inscriptions.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Ibid. pp.245-259.

¹⁹⁴ S.R.Balasubrahmanyam, *Koperunjingan*, Madras, 1965, p.74.

¹⁹⁵ St.Sambandar, *Tēvāram*, 130:1.

¹⁹⁶ T.G.Aravamuthan, *The Kaveri the Makharis and the Sangam Age*, Madras, 1925, p.119, SII. Vol. II, No's. 280, 284, 287, 290, 292, 294.

¹⁹⁷ N.Kasinathan, *Kaverippumpattinam in inscriptions.*, Pumpuhar, Madras, 1975, p.21.

¹⁹⁸ SII. vol.II,pt.III, para.112, p.253.

¹⁹⁹ S.Ponnusamy, *Sri Tyagaraja Temple-Tiruvarur*, Madras, 1972, pp.31-32.

One of them was named Paravai²⁰⁰ probably after the famous Paravai Nacchiyar of the same temple. The popularity of Paravai Nacchiyar is evident from an inscription of the time of Aditya I (A.D. 871-907) which makes mention of “Tiruvarur Nangai Paravai.”²⁰¹ Rajaraja I is said to have erected an image of Paravai Nacchiyar in Rajarajesvaram.²⁰² *Tiruvisaippa*, one of the sacred Saivite works, refers to a number of such names as referred to in the inscription. In Tiruvarur a temple is said to have been named after Paravai Nacchiyar as Paravai *un mantali* (the mud temple of Paravai). St. Sundarar had sung a song in praise of the Lord who stilled the waves (Paravai) and saved the city from Varuna’s anger.²⁰³ One of the famous *devadasis* of the Tiruvarur temple of the time of Rajendra I was called Nangai Paravai.²⁰⁴ A few of the *Taliccheri-ppendugal* of Rajarajesvaram are said to have come from the Tiruvorriyur Temple.²⁰⁵ Three girls called *emperumanadiyar* (girl servants of Visnu temple) as mentioned in the inscription, appear to have come from Mamanikoil in Thanjvur.²⁰⁶ These indicate that the system was already in vogue throughout the Cōla domain.

Though Rajaraja I centralised the system by transferring four hundred of them to his newly built temple at Tanjore and the evidences show that the system was still extended to the neighbourhood. An inscription of Rajendra I (A.D.1012-1044) found at Kolar tells that the system was extended to the Durga Temple at Kolar.²⁰⁷ The record states that the temple had the services of twenty-four dancing-girls. K.K. Pillay holds that Rajaraja-I might have introduced the system in the Sucindram Temple. An inscription found in the Guhanathasvami temple at Kanyakumari, dated A.D. 1040²⁰⁸ lends support to his claim. This may be true in the case of the temples of Nanjil Nadu region alone. But the position is slightly

²⁰⁰ SII, vol.II, pt.I II, para.41.

²⁰¹ SII, vol.III, No.24.

²⁰² Ibid. vol.II, pt.II, No.38; SITI., vol. I, No.22(a) Ibid.vol. II. No.896.

²⁰³ S.R. Balasubrahmanyam, *Early Chola Temples* (906-985 A.D.), Madras, 1971, p.195.

²⁰⁴ ARE, of 1919, No. 680.

²⁰⁵ SII, vol. II, pt.III, para.226.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. paras 117,178,247,277.

²⁰⁷ K.V. Subrahmania Aiyer, *Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekkan*, vol.I, Madras,1917,pp 332-333.

²⁰⁸ TAS, vol.I, p.240.

different in South Travancore, for, here was an earlier instance of the employment of *vellattikal* (free women) in the Parthibasekhara-puram Temple.²⁰⁹ The Cōlas, particularly Rajaraja I, were responsible for the introduction of the system in Sri Lanka. According to tradition, the *devadasis* of Tamil Nadu used to go there in the month of February and dance in the Hindu temples of Jaffna.²¹⁰ It is a fact of history that Rajaraja I constructed a few Hindu *devalayas* in Sri Lanka to commemorate his naval victory. Perhaps he might have sent the *devadasi* system to Sri Lanka.²¹¹

In his twenty-ninth year (of the reign) Ko-Rajakesarivarman alias Sri Rajarajadeva,²¹² had given (a number of) Nivandakkurar as Nivandakkarar of the Lord Sri Rajarajesvara (temple) and transferred 400 temple women (See Annexure Table I to III-e) as temple women and to these persons shares (*pangu*) were allotted as allowance (*nivandha*), which consisted of the produce of one *veli* of land, was to be one hundred *kalam*s of paddy, (measured) by *marakkal* called (after) Adavallan, which is equal to a Rajakesari, a linear measure.

***Taliccheri* Inscriptions**

There are long inscriptions inscribed on the outside the wall of the North shrine of the Rajarajesvaram temple at Tanjore constructed by Rajaraja I.²¹³ Among these inscriptions there is one which gives an elaborate account of a *Taliccheri* appended to the temple. This *Taliccheri* inscription are found inscribed to the right and left side of the north entrance of the circuit house in twenty-three lines and divided into three parts. Its total length is 55.78 meters. The major part of this inscription is quite readable. Since in certain places the stones have broken in to scales only a few letters are unable to be read.

²⁰⁹ *Ten Pandya Copper Plates*, pp.A1-A18.

²¹⁰ Beryl De Zoete, *Dance and Magic Drama in Ceylon*, London, n.d.,p.64.

²¹¹ M.D. Raghavan, *India in Ceylonese History, Society and Culture*, Madras, 1964, p.68.

²¹² SII,Vol II, No. 65

²¹³ K. Sivaramalingam, *op. cit.*, VChap. I.

The *Taliccheri* of Rājarājeśvaram

These inscriptions pave the way for the Rajarajesvaram *Taliccheri* settlement. It is found on the northern, southern and western side of Raja Rajeshvaram. They are named after the direction they face, like North *Taliccheri*, South *Taliccheri*²¹⁴ and West *Taliccheri*. The south and north *Taliccheri* were further divided into two parts namely north wing and south wing. The south wing has under its two wings ninety-two houses in each wing, with a total of one hundred and eighty four houses. The north wing had in its south wing ninety-five houses and in its north wing ninety-six houses. The west *Taliccheri* had twenty-five houses. In these four hundred houses, four hundred vestals were allowed to settle. These vestals were called as *Taliccheripendukaḷ* by the inscriptions. The inscriptions give a detailed account of the names of women and of various places from who came and settle in *Taliccheri*.²¹⁵ (See Annexure Table – II).

Common Names in *Taliccheri* inscription

Some names are in two letters, common names in *Taliccheri* of two letters; a few to indicate are, Kami, Pūmi, Pūti,²¹⁶ Aḷi, Modi, Mari, Pal, Umai, Eri, Tiru, Kaḷu, Devi, and Pavai²¹⁷ etc (14 names). There is one long name i.e., Porkoyil Tillai Aḷaki among all the names inscribed (14 letters). Ravikula Manickam, Nīrani Pavala Kundru are some less lengthy. Nearly 40%²¹⁸ of the total 400 names have the indication of their villages, Koyils (temples), the gods and the tradition of kings.

The remaining names are only the common ones, e.g. Eri, Kuppai, Thutti, Ūthari, moonch, pittu, kallarai, panthal, pattam, Nichal, kandam, chandai, mandai, Etchi mandai. Even these names were suited to people living in small villages.

If there were two women in *Taliccheri* having same name those were

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid. of p.49.

²¹⁶ SII, vol II, No.66 part II .

²¹⁷ SII, vol II, No.60, pp.191,195.

²¹⁸ Ibid. p. 194.

differentiated either by height or age²¹⁹ such as *ciriya* or *periya*. There were two women hailing from Killikudi having the same name as *Sīrudaiyal* and they were differentiated *Periya Sīrudaiyal* and *Chiriya Sīrudaiyal*.²²⁰ Likewise, another two women came from *Kadampur Tiru Ilankoyil* and have the same name as Nakkam. And these two have been too; differentiate as *Periya Nakkam* and *Ciriya Nakkam*.

Sometimes the colour of the body also used to differentiate. There were women from Ayiratadi having the name ‘Tiruvadi’ one was pre-titled with colour as *Kariya black Tiruvadi*²²¹ and the other one as *Thiruvadi*. There were three women under the name *Aravam*, one was *Periya*, second one was *Ciriya* and that one was differentiate with colour as *Kariya Aravam*.²²² *Ciriya Aravam* was from *Tiruvaru Periya Taliccheri*, and *Kariya Aravam* was *Nayadirpuram*.

In some cases, the names were not differentiated.²²³ *Kandiyur-Tiruvarur Periya Taliccheri*, *Umai-Pachchil Tiru Achiramathil*, *Aravam-Thiruvarur*, *Tiru Aranerikoil*, *Chempon-Ampar Tirumakalam*, some women had the names of the trees as their names²²⁴ such as *Ilavam*, *Oru Panai*, *Murungai*, *Vennaival* mentioned by *Sambandar*²²⁵ and one name was *grove*. Some names were pertaining to dance²²⁶ such as, *Manram Udaiyal*, *Maḷalai Cilambu*, *Eṭuttapādam*, *Āṭal Aḷagi*, *Cīruṭai Kaḷal*, *Tlillai Kūtti*, *Ampala Kūtti*, *Kōtai*, and *Pāñcāli*. Some names were related to light, knowledge and meaning place²²⁷ such as *Jotivilakku*, *Tisaisudar*, *Sangam*, *Arivatti*, *Kudithangi*, *Mathura Vasaki*, *Vaḷuvanilai*, *Innilai Vanchi*, *Sengulam*, *Vadavayil*, and *Ezhuvanai Peruvaḷi Kailayam*. There were ten (10) names pre-titled with *pon* “gold” and two names post-titled with *pon*. There were 3 *Vallis*, 5

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid. p. 195.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ First Tirumurai, Dharumapura Adhina publications (Tamil), 1954, p.104.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ K. Sivaramalingam, *op. cit.*, Chap. I.

Sundaris, 8 Manikkams, 14 Devis.²²⁸ Moreover, the names were attached with caste, number or group as Arayiram, Saththam, Nagarathar, Etti, Chetti and Kulaman. There were 8 each in Petra Tiru and ‘Umai’, 6 (six) in Aravam, 5 each in Pattali, Achcham, 9 each in Ayyaru and Tiruvaigaru (names of the place), 4 each in Arur, 7 names either pre-titled or post-titled with Tillai.²²⁹ *Tiruvisaippa* was the name of a women named ‘Nirani Paḷankunru’. She were lived in Palaiyartru Araioruman Tali, some names were related to Kaman, they names are Kami, Kamakkodi, Kamamohi, Kamutri, Kamakodi and so on.²³⁰

Names attached with Royal Tradition

The names pre-titled with royal tradition those are, Chola Kula Sundari, Chola Sudamani, Chola Devi, Chola Madevi, Chola Kone, and Cholam. There were three names post-attached to their names those are Vīra Choli, Sundara Choli, and Cheyya Cholam. Some names recall those of the Cōḷa Kings in line with Vijayālaya notably,²³¹ Aditthi (Aditya Cōḷa), Kannara Devi (Kannara Tevar), Vīra Choli, Kunjaram Palli (Parantaka I), Gandar Achchi (Gandarāditya), Arinji, Arikulasekari (Arunjeyar), Sundara Choli (Sundara Cōḷan), Arumoli, Ravikula Manikkam and Rajaraji (Rajarajan I).

Some names are after those of the Cōḷa Queens. There were Sembianmadevi, Kundavai, Olagamadevi, Panchavan Madevi, Cholamadevi, Tribhuvanamadevi, and Kamakodi. The Kamakodi was daughter of Rajaraja I²³². Madeviadigal was a daughter of Rajaraja I.²³³ The Kīḷapalavur inscription mentions Paḷavettairayan-vikkrama-tittan, Vikkrama Thonki and Vikkrama-thirti that were related with the Paḷuvettaiyar family.²³⁴ There were other names in memory of the other kings such as the Cōḷas, Tennavan Madevi, Mīnavan Madevi Manapara

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Ibid.’ T.V. Sadasiva Pandarathar, *Pirkala Cholar Varalaru*, (Tamil) 1974, p.32; SII vol. II, p. 259.

²³² Ibid. p.198.

²³³ T.V.Sadasiva Pandarathar, op.cit., p.133.

²³⁴ SII, Vol 19, No.212, *Pazhavur puthaiyalgal*, p.53.

(Pāṇḍyas), Cēra Mangai, Villavan Madevi (pertaining to Cēras), Pūthi (Kodupalur Velir), Malaiyaman (Nadunattu Malaiyaman), Egavīthi (pertaining to Pallava king). The copper plates of Uttama Cōḷa Madras museum tell that there was one Egavīthi²³⁵. Some were indicating the Saiva Temples; Koyil, Ambalam, Ponnambalam, Poṅkōyil (pertaining to Tillai) and some were for other *koyils* (Temples). Ilankoyil, Tūngani, Katral.

Some names were indicative of gods such as Śīva,²³⁶ Parami, Sadhuri, Sivadevi, and Soma Nadhi, Adavallal, Vīthi Vidangi, Tiru Nilakanda, Candra Sekhara, and Ambala Kūttāṭi. In the name *Adavallal*, there were two women. Narayani, Varasi, Camundī were three women having this names. In the ‘Umai’ there were eight women. In the names are Kadukal and Nangali. There were two women with the name ‘Ponnalum manthan’. The names Kadukal and Ponnalum Mathan are indicated in the inscriptions at Rajarajesvaram.²³⁷

There were two women in the name ‘Ganapati’. Other names were Sīdevi, Tiruvadi, Ananti, Rami and Aramutha were with Vaisnava denomination. The names pertaining to Vaishnava Temples are as follows Tiruvaḷi, Arangam, Sīkuruḷūr and Tiruvenkadam. Some names were the indications of *koyils* (temples) such as, Tiruvenkadam, Tiru Mūlaṭṭanam, Araneri, and Karonam (indicating the Saiva temples).²³⁸ The *devadasis* were called as *Viraliyar* and *Āḍukala Makalir* in Caṅkam Age. Later they were called as *Nadakakganikaiyar* and *Kūttiyar*. The word Kūttiyar is found in the inscription of Pallava, Pāṇḍya, and the early period Cōḷas.

Nakkan

The word ‘Nakkan’ is not found in Caṅkam literature. But it was used very popularly in the Cōḷa period, as indicated by *Tirumuṟai* author’s life Appar,

²³⁵ K. Sivaramalingam, op. cit., Chap. I.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ SII, vol II, No.5, Kadugal ponnalanamathal krishnamurthi, Sithalur Kalvetugal, *Āvanam-2*, p.19.

²³⁸ K. Sivaramalingam, op. cit., Chap. I.

Sundarar and Sambanthar's in their writings. Śiva was titled as *Nakkan*.²³⁹ The *Panniru Tirumurai* were known as *Nakkan*.²⁴⁰

The name *Nakkan* indicates Rajaraja I employed it for *Taliccherippendier* due to his love for the Lord Śiva.²⁴¹ Those dedicated themselves for the service to Śiva were prefixed with the word *Nakkan*. The *devadasis* were prefixed *Nakkan* in their names and subsequently those who dedicated themselves to God's (Siva's) service did so. Rajendra's wife 'Panchan Madevi' dedicated herself to the service for Śiva and was called as *Nakkan* Panchan Madevi. This we come to know through the inscriptions.²⁴² Sundara Cōla's two inscriptions say that Cheran's wife was called as 'Nakkan Akkara Nankai'²⁴³.

Talaikōli

Talaikoli was a scale measuring 7 (seven) *jans* "span". It was made up of (*mūñkil* "bamboo"). Each *kanu* was embedded with *manis* (bells) and gold was also applied in between the pan of bells.²⁴⁴ *Talaikoli*, the title was given after the Cankam age and we came to know this in *Arangetrukathai* of *Cilappatikāram*. During the Cōla period, Talaikolis rendered service in Tirukoyils.

From these lines of *Perunkatai* it is known that the Talaikolis taught dancing. From the inscription of the 11th year reigning of Uttama Cōla, we came to know that one Talaikoli having the name *Nakkan Pradhamadevi Mummudi Chola* Talaikoli donated to Anandesvarar-koyil at Udaiyarkudi and she acted as the dance

²³⁹ First Thirumurai Dharumapura Athina Publications (Tamil), 1953, p. 583; Fifth Thirumurai Dharumapura Athina publications, 1961, p.184:

ikf;Nfhs; fz;zpau; iftis khy;nra;J ntstNt
ef;f uhAy nfg;Fk; gypf;F elg;gNj
ek;kid ef;fd; Kf;fzhid
ef;fhdk MSil ahd;

²⁴⁰ *Panniru Tirumurai* 2:3:5, 6:29:7, 7:5:3.

²⁴¹ Vai.Sundaresa Vandaiyar, op.cit. p.21.

²⁴² ARE., of 1924, No.385; Ibid. of 1918, No. 464.

²⁴³ ARE., of 1918, No.464; SII Vol XIII, No.153, 154).

²⁴⁴ T.R. Ramachandran, *Tamilar Nagarigamum panpadum*, p.244.

mistress at Tyagarajar-koyil, Tiruvarur.²⁴⁵ The plates of olden times indicate that the King gifted 1008 Kalanju gold to the dancers those who performed the Bharatha Natya before the King and the dance Master.²⁴⁶ While Pathiyilar and *Tevaradiyar* performing Santikunipam dance, Isipatniyar sang Agamarkam and varikolam and when Isaipatniyar performing Santikunipam and Cokkam, *Patiyilar* sang Agamarkam and Varikolam.

Śrīranganāyaki was a one of the best dancer. The *sasana* of Sundaraya Perumal temple at Ponnamarvati (Pudukottai) was famous for the recital of this dancer. During the beginning *Indira Viḷā* (Festival of Indra), the king and other official gave to the trunk of the *Paṭṭattu Ānai* a garland and lead the procession within the city. Then this was given to the dance master in the *Tēr* (car) and once again it proceeded with procession. After all the modalities were over, it was put in the auditorium and who won was called ‘Talaikoli’. Seven Masters (*Ādal Asiriyans*) were appointed for *Natyam*²⁴⁷ (Training dances) for the 400 dancers brought from the *Taliccheri* to Rajarajesvaram. The inscription in the Anathesvarar Temple at Udaiyarkudi belonging to the eleventh year of the rule of Uttama Chola introduces Nakan Prathamadevi²⁴⁸ the leading dancer as the daughter of Ārur Devanar. This noble lady who donated to Anathesvarar Temple was a teacher of the art of dancing in Tyagarajasvami Temple at Tiruvarur.

The inscription says in the Tyagarajasvami about the three Talaikolies of these temples at Tiruvarur.²⁴⁹ The Devasiriyān-*mandapa* found in this temple even today is significant in literacy reputation. These inscriptions also mention as to how in this *mandapa* the deity was housed and dancers were dancing conventionally. In the Devasiriyān-*mandapa* of Vītividanga Tevar Temple, when the function was held, the dance performances of the leading dancers of Pūngoliand Nayaka

²⁴⁵ Nguhrpupau; ,uh.,stuR ‘kzptpoh kyū; fl;Liufspd; njhFg;G – mopgLk; jkpo; tpohf;fs;’ > p.80.

²⁴⁶ Mayilai Drinivengadasamy, *Tamilar valartha Alagu kalaigal*, p.143.

²⁴⁷ Nguhrpupau; ,uh. ,stuR – kzptpoh kyū;f;fl;Lufspd; njhFg;G – mopgLk; jkpou; tpohf;fs; (g.v.75).

²⁴⁸ SII. vol XIX, No.283.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. vol XVII, No’s.593,600,606.

Talaikoli and Pukanthurai Vallava Talaikoli were performed. These two dancers were introduced as the *Talaikoli* of the Arurkoyil. They have taught dance to the Goddess of Ārūrkoil. The teacher leading dancer of Arūr UmaiyaI lived in the north car street of the temple.

From the inscriptions of the fourth year of the reign of Parakesarivarman, Nakan Achi Nangai, the daughter of Talitevanar was a leading dancer. Furthermore the leading dancer, Elankili is known from the inscriptions found in the fourth year of Ādityakarikalar. The inscriptions of Parantaka I mentions the daughter of *Taliccheri* Devanar as a leading dancer. Another inscription mentions the leading dancer of Tiruvidaimarutur. It is to be noted, that Tiruvidaimarutur²⁵⁰ is one of the places that sent great numbers dancing girls to Rajarajesvaram *Taliccheri* of Tanjore. Many dancers served Vadakailasam situated on the campus of Tirvaiyaru Ayyarappar temple. Among them few were recruited from these places and known as Aiyankonda Chola Paramakam Nakkan, Pumiyaana Paramakkavitank Talaikoli, Nakkan Chola Vitachathiriyana Olagamadevi Talaikoli, Nakkan Pazhola Kundram Mthurranthaka Talaikoli, Nakkan Thiribuvna Madeviyana Nigarili Chola Talaikoli, Nakkan Alliyana Raja Kulamani Talaikoli and Nakkan Ayyarana Kaliyuka Sundra Talaikoli. Along with these leading dancers, Ganavati and Araiyan Arumozhi acted as *Naṭṭuvas* in Vadakailasam and assisted the dancers in learning the art.²⁵¹

During the reign of Rajaraja I, in Tillaisthanam Neyyatiyappar temple there were noted dancers such as Nakkan Vattilana Ninra Vidanka Talaikoli, Tarayan Manaiyana Aranka Talaikoli. In the reign of the same king, the inscription found in Allur Vadakudi Paramesvarar temple reveals the Nakan Vennaival Tillaiyaḷaka Talaikoli. These leading dancers not only performed dancers but also taught the art of dancing to *Devardiyars*. Among the dancers in the Tiruvatikai Vīrattanesvarar temple also a leading dancer was found. In Kiriyaṃpapuram Arikesanatar temple

²⁵⁰ Ibid. XIX, No.92, Ibid. vol XXIII, No.249, Ibid. XIX, No.181.

²⁵¹ Ibid. Vol V, No.520.

Nakan Kondaiyalviyana Viraparana Talaikoli taught dance for the *Devaradiyars*.²⁵²

In Tiruvorriyur Adipurisvarar temple, there were many Talaikolis who excelled in singing as well as dancing. They participated not only in the ceremonies of the temple but also arranged dance performances for the *Devaradiyars* and *Taliyilars*. In the festival of 8th of *Āvani* in the midnight the dance performance of Agamarkam was given by Uravakina Talaikoli.²⁵³

During the field research of Tiruvasi Maturai Varatisvarar temple, the new inscriptions of Cōlas were found. They prove that there were Pachil Thiru Amalesvaram Nakan Modiyana Mummudi Chola Talaikoli, Alāgiyana Chola Talaikoli, Nakkan Modiyana Mummudi Chola Talaikoli, Nakkan Kuraviyana Tiruvaranga Talaikoli, Nakkan Karpaka Valliyana Tiruvaiyatra Talaikoli, Nakkan Kotramana Viti Vedaraka Talaikoli, tri-rule of the Chola leading dancer Nakkan Vitividanga dancer, Nakan Tiruvaranga leading dancer and Nakan Tiruvaiyattu leading dancers were all employed. Another new inscription informs that the *Pathiliyar* and the *Devaradiyars* during the reign of Pandya Empire II served in this temple²⁵⁴ as players (*Kūttars*).

The dancers in the temple also learnt the art of 'Kūttu' and danced efficiently. The daughter of Tiruvekampa Nankai who belonged to Vilvaranesvarar temple in Nallur and the *Devaradiyal* of this temple, namely Udaiyatchi Kulothunga Chola Manickam has performed *Sabhāi Kūttu*. After the death of this lady as a substitute for her was nominated. She was the daughter of Polkoyil Nangai, Pūmalavi who danced the *Sakkai* during the festivals. Besides she was appointed by the elders of the temple to sing the *Tiruvempavai* before the Lord.²⁵⁵

²⁵² SII. Vol V, No.603; Ibid. VIII, No.678; ARE., of 1921, No.383; Ibid. of 1916, No.468.

²⁵³ ARE., of 1912, No.211.

²⁵⁴ *Pudukottai Kalvēttu* 4, 6.

²⁵⁵ ARE., of 1940, No.41.

The players who were well encouraged by the elders of the temple also taught the art of 'Kūttu' to the dancing women of the temple. To bear testimony to this fact the inscription in Visvaranesvarar temple at Nallur is the best example.

The Service of the Dancing Girls

Indus Valley civilization (2500 B.C.-1500 B.C.) is considered as the civilization of the Dravidians. It is said during this period the art of dancing might have grown. The artists have identified from the dancing posture of a lady in the bronze statue.²⁵⁶ It is likely it had something to do with the early culture of the Tamils.

Decorations of Devadasis

Prior to performing *kūttu*, one is needed to beautify for evoking fascination among viewers. The dancers (*Devadasis*) too adorned themselves in styles and attracting beauties and also, according to their roles.

Hair Dressing

The dancers applied the paste of the gooseberry and *kasthuri* on their heads. Later they bathed and then they warmed their hair with *Akirpukai*. Then they spreaded the hair and de-knotted the hair-knots with their nails. It was after this that they smeared *Karpura* powders. They plaited their dark hair with the flowers *Kaḷunīrmalar* and also *Kuvalaitatai*. On the divisions in the hair they added beautiful small flower garlands, pearl garlands, bead garlands and different kinds of decoration in their respective places of the body. The hair-do was just put into a knot or ball. The knots were either at the back of the head or side-wise. Only a few

²⁵⁶ M. Rajamanickam Pillai, *Mohanjadaro or Indus Valley civilization* (Tamil), p.182.

of them plaited their hair into a lengthy manner, decorated it with flower garlands, applied 'Kasthuri' and danced with a sweet odour wafting around them.

Ornaments

From the sculptures and literatures it is understood, that adorning from head to the legs with the ornaments for dancing was the fillip of the days. These ornaments were made up of various types of beads; gold and silver were adorned in accordance with the dance and the person who danced.

(a) Head Ornament

From sculptures it is understood the head ornaments were in use. They were the *Toyyakam*, *Pūrapalai*, *Pulakam* and *Sulamani*; *Thoiyaham* is appended to a series of chains and is matched with the hair-dress. The series of chains are known as *Pūrapalai*. *Pūrapalai* which is known as *Thoyiham* and 'Seethevi' is a part of *Thoyiham*. It is also known as *Ilambaham*. This is understood from the line in '*Seevahasinthamani*'²⁵⁷, 'Aranga Ani Nadaga Magalir Ayanoothal Ilambagam'. These head ornaments are found in Kumbhakonam, Nagesvara temple and the dancing girl's paintings of the Cōlas. The *Patakai* worn on the forehead was known as the *Pattam*. This was like a strip either put up on the top of the forehead separately or along with the head decoration in a strip. This *Pattam* was of three types *Rathina Pattam*, *Puppattam* and *Patrapattam*.

(b) Ear Ornaments

Different kinds of ear ornaments are seen in the sculptures. Among them *Kudambai* and *Kuzhai* are significant. In the bore of the ear, that has been allowed to grow the roll of the Palmira leaf, in squared and inserted which is known as *Kudumbai*. This is also called *Patrakundalam*. Instead of the Palmira leaf the golden leaf was also used; cf. *Seevaha sinthamani*²⁵⁸ talks of golden leaf *sempon*

²⁵⁷ *Sirppasennūl*, p.91; *Sivagasinthamani*, 6:1442; *Kalitokai*, 79:1-6.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 4:1103.

olai. In the sculpture that reveals the dancing postures the ear ornament 'Kudambai' is found.

The ear ornaments known as *Kuzhai* and *Kundalam* are also found in the sculptures. The books on sculptures²⁵⁹ introduce three types of 'Kundalams' they are *Simakundalam*, *Viyalakundalam* fashion *Makarakundalam*. Among these the *Makarakundalam* fashion in the model of the *Mahara* fish is found in the sculptures. Distinctively enough in the dancing posture of Siva *Makara Kundalam* is present. Among the sculptures found in the Pullamankai and Melaperumpallam temples some of them bear the *Makara Kundalam*. Along with the *Makara Kundalam* there were the ear-rings that positioned in the ears of the dancing ladies. *Sinthamani* speaks of the *Kundalam* that looked like the *Indiravil* (rainbow).²⁶⁰

The ear ornament that was flat rounded and embedded with precious stones was known as *katipu*.²⁶¹ During the reign of the Cholas, the lady dancers wore this *katipu* with great delight is known from the sculptures in the Kumbakonam Nageshwarar temple and Melaperumpallam Valampuranathar temples.

(c) Neck Ornaments

The female dancers of the Cōla period danced wearing neck ornaments made of gold and precious stones. The most important ones are *Kandikai*, *Chavadi*, *Cherapali*, *Maniyaram*, *Muttaram* and gold chain with the *Patakkam*. Since the three neck ornament like the *Kandikai*, *Charapali* and *Chavadi* were found in the sculptures in the Cōla period, it can be known, that the dancers worn there ornaments. The sculptures in the Melaperumpallam Valampurinathar temple prove that the female dancers wore long slender pearl chains.

²⁵⁹ *Sirppasennil*, p.92.

²⁶⁰ *Sivagasinthamani*, 13: 2696; 5:1257.

²⁶¹ *Sirppa sennil*, p. 92.

The epic ‘*Sinthamani*’ talks about the different types of neck ornaments worn by the dancers. They were ornaments like *Pumalai* red coral chains made of *sempon*, chains studded with sparkling beads, chains embedded with precious stones and pearl chains.²⁶² These pearl chains were of different types. The lines speak how like the shape of the *Makara* fish an ornament was made and was worn on the shoulders²⁶³. Different varieties of coloured stones were studded on ornaments. Some ornaments were made of the fire-red coloured beads.²⁶⁴ A lady of ‘Tirukailaya’ engaged in a *nanaula*²⁶⁵ describes about the way how she decorated herself; the word *Kanti* noted in *Kailaya Ula* refers to the *Kantikai* worn as a neck ornament.²⁶⁶

(d) Hand Ornaments

In the sculptures of the Cōla period the dancers are found wearing *Kadavalai*, *Tolvalai*, hand bangles, *Pariagam* and finger rings. In the sculptures on the *grīva* of the *vimāna* of Tirusementurai Chandrasekhara temple a female dancer is seen wearing finger-rings. Another sculpture of a lady dancer bears the finger-ring in Tenneri Sivan temple. The *Sinthamani* elaborates about the varied types of finger-rings²⁶⁷ worn by the female artists.²⁶⁸

(e) Waist-Ornaments

The waist ornaments were utilized in two ways. They not only enhance the beauty of the waist, but also tighten the dress worn around the waist. The two

²⁶² kzkpfuk; tha; Ngho;e;J tho;Kj;j tIQ; Foe;jhq;F mzp.

²⁶³ fy;Nru; G+z;nfhs; fjpu; Kiy’> ‘,iyahu; vup kzpg; G+z; Vw;J Kiy.

²⁶⁴ *Sivagasinthamani*, 1:170;3:719:732.

²⁶⁵ Copj; jpUkjpak; kw;nwhd;whk; vd;W Kfj;ij tUTila ehz;kPd; R+o;e;jhw;Nghg; ngUq; fhspa Kj;jhua fz;l; jzpe;jhd;’> ‘tha;e;j rPu; tz;L tsha tsu; thrpif R+l;bf; fz;b fOj;jpy; ftpd; Nru;j;J.

²⁶⁶ *Panniru tirumurai* 11:8:117-118,103-104

²⁶⁷ kzpahu; fhe;jl; Ftptud; Nkw; fkpag; ngupa tUtpiya rpwpa kzp Nkhjpuq;fs;

²⁶⁸ *Sivagasinthamani*, 13:2696.

waists ornaments are the *Mekalai*²⁶⁹ and *Araipatikai*. The *Sinthamani* speaks of the *Mekalai* worn by the female dancer.²⁷⁰

(f) Ornaments worn around the legs

The *Sinthamani* lists out the ornaments worn around the legs of the female dancers.²⁷¹ *Thirukailaya Gnanalla* identifies the ornaments worn by the lady dancers.

Among them the *Pariyakam* was one-third of the breadth of *cilampu*. This would be joined with chains to the leg-finger rings. This significant ornament of the ladies of the Cōla period was rare. Ornaments that are found in the sculptures and literatures were wrought in valuable beads, pearls, gold and silver as is known from the inscriptions.

Among them a few inscriptions at Rajarajesvaram and a few of the inscriptions on the Tiruvaiyaru Ayyarappar temple bear testimonies to this fact.²⁷² The waist ornaments namely *Araipattikai* of different types were donated in those days to the godly figures. The designing technology is known from the inscriptions of the twenty-ninth year of the rule of Rajaraja I. The *Tirupattikai* with *silampiri mukam* consisted of floral designs decorated with precious stones and pearls and it cost twenty-six kalanju of gold inclusive of tax to the Government.²⁷³ The same inscription speaks about the golden bangles that were studded with pearls. Another inscription says about the ‘Talvadam’²⁷⁴ embedded with pearls.²⁷⁵

²⁶⁹ gRk; nghw; fpz;fpzpj; Njhlyu; Nfhij kpd;WSk;G Nkfiy Mba \$j;jp jd; mire;j rhay; ,iyg; nghyp G+z;Kiy vupnghd; Nkfiy.

²⁷⁰ *Sivagasinthamani*, 5:1207, 1210.

²⁷¹ *Sivagasinthamani*, 1:177.

²⁷² SII. vol XXII No’s.38, 46, 48, 59, 93, Ibid. vol V, No’s.512, 520, 521.

²⁷³ jpUg;gl;bif xd;wpy; rpk;gpupKfk; xd;Wk; kl;lg;G+l;gj;Jk;> nkhl;L xd;Wk;> tplq;F ehYk; cl;glj; jltpf;l;bd gspq;F ,UgJk; nghj;jp gd;dpuz;Lk;’> Nfhj;j Kj;J fwLQ; rf;fj;JQ; rg;gjpAkhf Kj;J vOEhw;W Kg;gj;J ehYk> muf;Fk; cl;gl epiw ehw;gjpd; foQ;Rf;F tpiy fhR ,Ugj;jhW SII. vol II, No.46.

²⁷⁴ jho;tlk; xd;wpy; Nfhj;j GQ;ir Kj;J ehDhw;W Kg;gjpdy; epiw foQ;fiwNa ,uz;L kQ;rhbAk; Fd;wpy;F tpiy fhR fhy;> jho;tlk; xd;wpy; Nfhj;j GQ;ir Kj;J vz;Zhw;W vz;gj;Njopdy; epiw Kf; foQ;riuf;F tpiy fhR miu.

²⁷⁵ SII. vol II, No.44.

Apart from these, the Rajarajeswaram inscriptions note ornaments like- *Muchara Muttumalai*, golden forehead, *Pattams*, *Tirumālais*, the golden flowers stitched to the plates, *Talimanivadams*, *Tiralmanivadams*, *Vadugavali*, *Ekavali*, *Kandanan*, *Vakuvalaiyankals*, *Kalavam*, *Kudam-bais*, *Todus* and finger-rings. Besides, it talks about the valuable gems like *Corals*, *Komalam*, different types of pearls, precious stones, diamonds and *Vaiduryam*.²⁷⁶ Viewing the literary descriptions at the background and correlating the ornaments found in the sculptures, one can understand the varied types of ornaments worn by the artists and dancers of those days.

Dress

Different types of dress are found in the sculptures pertaining to dance in the days of Cōlas. Many of them were worn from the waist downward. There is no dress worn to conceal the upper part of the body. In many of the sculptures there is only a light dress worn on the top. In certain sculptures there are the silk dresses. To identify them it is best to read the *Sirpacennūl*. The edges of the silk dress were heavy, overflowing on the sides. Besides the shawl was merged with the body while the edges were shown prominently. These were without any shrink and were as though well ironed.²⁷⁷

Perfumes and Cosmetics

There were beauticians who made the make-up according to the rules given in the books. It was significant following their guidelines and also due to their experience. The art of beautifying and the efficiency of the beauticians are well told in the *Sinthamani*.²⁷⁸ In order to make their hair rich and fragrant the female

²⁷⁶ SII. vol II, No.34,42,51,55.

²⁷⁷ *Sirppa sennool* p.106-107.

²⁷⁸ *Sivagasinthamani* 2:488.

‘gRk; nghw; nwhU wpod; kzpf; FioA ePtp iktpup
FO ypdhis kq;fyf; fbg;Gr; Nru;j;jpg; nga;jdu;
gpizad; khiy Nahup iyr; rhe;J G+rpr; nra;jdu;

dancers used the gooseberry paste, *kasthuri* and also perfumed oil. They also bathed in the water that was mixed with aromatics. After they dried their hair well, they steamed their hair with scents. Besides to give a fragrant smell they used *Sithari*.²⁷⁹ Along with the smearing of the body with sandal paste (*cantaṇam*) there was the custom of writing on the shoulders and the parts of the breasts.²⁸⁰ The fragrant powder was smeared all over the body. The powder made of the pollen grains of the flowers was also smeared to give a pleasant odour.

They applied oil to the hair and plaited the hair or else they heaped the hair together and made it into a knot. There they put different kinds of flowers made into garlands. Flowers like *kongam*, *konrai*, *vengai*, *kuvalai*, *mallikai*, *talai*, *canpakam* were employed to adorn the head. Inside the hair the leaf of the flower *kulavai* was inserted. The inscriptions of the Cōla period inform that the artists who performed the *kūttu* spread the body with the rice flour, *mai*, oil and turmeric powder. The inscription in Tiruvisalur Pitcha Tevar temple speaks about this.²⁸¹ It also says that the committee ordered for the celebration of the temple and provide needed for the make-up materials for those who perform *Kūttu* and for the musicians. Hence when an Act was under enactment, they were given the needed accessories like *mai*, oil, powdered rice to smear on the body, turmeric powder and saree from the washerman. For the musicians *Kudamulavu* was given.

Funeral Honours

Since a *devadasi* was married to the immortal, she was hailed as a *nityasumangali* “ever auspicious female”. Tradition holds that on her death no worship was conducted in the temple. The dead body was to be covered by some

rpWGD; Nfhyk;.’

²⁷⁹ *Panniru tirumurai* 11:8:186.

²⁸⁰ *Sivagasinthamani*, 1:80.

²⁸¹ *Pudukottai kalvetugal*, p.7

’,t;fq; MWK; MLk; ,lj;J mq;fj;jhy; ikap
vd;diw ehopAk;> khTk;> muprp ehopAk;> kQ;rs; l gyKk;
tz;zhu; GlitAk;> FlkpohTk; Njtu; gz;lhuhj;jpNy
mt;thz;L rpfhfpak; nra;thNu ,lf;flthuhfTk;.’

kantanki-celai (a king of saree) and to be consumed by the fire-wood supplied from the temple.²⁸² The *Koyil Olugu* narrates the story of a boon granted to a *devadasi*. When the Lord asked: “What boon would you want?”; she replied: “Whenever any of my creed dies, the fire for cremation should be fetched from the temple kitchen, and to them must be offered a certain quantity of rice from the storehouse, and also *tīrtha* (sacred water), garland and *parivattam*²⁸³ (a piece of cloth). The sacred ash from a Siva temple or tulasi from a Vaisnava Temple was sent. The whole village participated in the funeral and her death was considered a public loss. A *devadasi* was always cremated as *sumangali* (auspicious female) wearing the trinket (*tali*). After the cremation the temple was purified and the God was served a curry of bitter vegetables. Thus the life of a *devadasi* came to an end.

The inscriptions and literature of the Cōlas provide ample for sketching the history of the *devadāsī* system. Delving deeply into the system of Devadasi, one can easily bring all the matters as greenery scenes in the serene even a frizzle of facts without falling down. The *Devadasis*, though performed multifaceted works, they were entirely converged towards cultural and spiritual services. It is clearly known that their lives lay in two strata. Those who were in the upper stratum, lead prestigious life having been paid grants-in-aid with honours and privileges. Whereas those in the low stratum less paid and did manual works for daily allowances.

During Cankam Age and after, especially during the period of the Cōlas, the sculptures, inscriptions, *Ula* literature and various other sources of those days provide ample evidences to trace their history. We are in the limelight regarding the origin of the *devadāsī* system and how it flourished. The names and other particulars of some 400 dancers are furnished in the inscriptions. This system covers *Taḷiccheri* very broadly. The girls were either voluntarily engaged or made to be

²⁸² *Cholan Purva Pattayam*, Cf. Vijaya Ramaswamy, *Textiles and weavers in Medieval South India*, Madras, 1986, p. 55.

²⁸³ *Koil Olungu*, pp. 134-135.

Devadasis by their relatives, especially by their parents. The dancing girls' adornment from the hair to heels with valuable costumes and ornaments show how affluent they were. Their dances were performed in *Mandapas* and *Arankas* in great temples. The varieties of music and the instruments, the postures of dancers and *karanas* show their expertise in the field. It is true that the *Devadāsīs* got from the public both acclamation and condemnation.