

# THE PRACTICE OF LAND DONATIONS IN KALKULAM TALUK AS REVEALED THROUGH THE INSCRIPTIONS

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## ABSTRACT

*The historical monuments such as temples, churches, mosques, palaces and forts occupied a significant place during the period of Ays, Cholas, Venad and Travancore dynasties in Kalkulam taluk of Kanyakumari District. From time immemorial, the rulers and the people gave much importance to religion and endowed lands lavishly for religious activities. Most of the inscriptions are donative in character to temples.*

**Key Words:** Kalkulam Taluk, Kanyakumari District, land, donations, gifts, temples, inscription, *puja*, lights.

## Introduction

Inscriptions are the primary source materials to trace out ancient history. Inscriptions engraved in the temples of Kalkulam taluk are noteworthy to bring out the hidden facts. The donations and gifts given to the temples by the people and the monarchs in various ways have been inscribed in the temples.<sup>1</sup>

## Land grants

The land donation occupied almost a unique place due to its enormity. In early days, during the time of kingship, land donations were made for various purposes like supply of flowers, making gardens, providing food, conducting *pujas* and festivals, chanting *mantras*, worship lamps, temple services, share holders of the village, the wages of temple servants, charitable purposes, feeding Brahmins, raising groves, gardens for supplying of fruits and flowers, maintenance of *tiruvodais* (ponds), for supply of *parisattam* (cloth) to the god and goddess and supply of water to the temple lands.

For instance, The rock-cut cave temple inscriptions at Thirunandikkarai in the *vatteluttu* alphabet of Tamil language exhibits the gift of lands in several villages donated by one Narayanan Sivakaran, a native of Mangalachcheri, to the deity of Tiruvallaval-*Bhatara* and to the temple of Thirunandikkarai – *Bhatara*. From these lands, four *kalam* were set apart for *Santippuram* (worship), five *kalam* for drummers and five *kalam* for the rice required for *bali* offerings and for those who clean the temple. From the rest of the lands, six *nali* of

rice was given daily for maintaining one perpetual lamp to the temple. The people who obstructed were subjected to punishment by the assembly of Mulikkalam.<sup>2</sup>

Thiruvidaikodu Siva temple inscription engraved on a rock lying on the south of the second *prakara* of the temple seems to suggest regarding the gift of land. It is in the *vatteluttu* alphabet of Tamil language and was assigned to the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The land mentioned on the inscription was gifted by *Omayanadu-Kilavan* alias Urvelan, on behalf of the *Araiyar* (The Chief) of *Omayanadu*, for sacred lamps and for supplying daily sacred offerings to the temple of Thiruvidaikkottu – Mahadeva in Marudattur.<sup>3</sup>

An inscription engraved on a pillar of the rock-cut cave temple at Thirunandikkarai in the Kalkulam taluk of the Padmanabhapuram division registers a gift of land by the *Perumakkal* (senior citizens) of Thirunandikkarai, and the *taliyalvan* (administrator of the temple) to Nambi Ganapati for meeting certain expenses of the midnight worship of the god of the temple. The assembly met together at Kurundambakkam and the gifted land was constituted into a new village, termed as Nandimangalam in *Kurunadu*.<sup>4</sup>

The inscription on the east base of the central shrine of the Siva temple of Thiruvithamkodu, registers a gift of the land called *Sirukulavari* for maintaining a *Vrischika vilakku* <sup>5</sup> in the temple of *Isana-Mahadeva*, for offering to the deity and for the rice to be given to the man who was supervising the lamp.<sup>6</sup>

The stone inscription located on the southern side of the temple at the village of Thirukkannankodu in Kalkulam taluk registers the land granted to the temple of Thirukkannankodu by a *Kavidi* <sup>7</sup> of Thiruvithamkodu.

The inscription inscribed on the east wall of Siva temple at Thirukkannankodu registers the gift of lands to the temple authorities of the lord of Thirukkannankodu by Somayaji Narayanan of Kizhmarudur for conducting *pujas* and offerings in the temple. The same temple inscription also speaks of the donation of lands made to Thirukkannadevar, the *mulavar* (the main deity) of Thirukkannankodu Perumal temple. Thippiramalai Krishna temple *Balikkal* inscription also reveals the donation of lands and buffaloes for burning two perpetual lamps to the Perumal Karumanickattalvar of the Thippiramalai temple by Vikramanukkan and his brothers.<sup>8</sup>

Inscriptions engraved on several detached stones in the base of the eastern *mandapa* of Adikesavaperumal temple at Thiruvattar contain the names of gifted fields.<sup>9</sup> Thiruvattar Adikesava Perumal temple inscription belonging to the King Vira Udaya Marthandavarman Tiruvadi depicts some gift of lands made to the temple of Thiruvattaru – Pallikonda – Perumal.<sup>10</sup> An inscription is found on the south wall of the

central shrine of the Adikesavaperumal temple at Thiruvattar. It is in *vattellettu* character of Malayalam language. It states that the King Vira Udaya Marthanda Varma Tiruvadi made arrangement with the gift of land for the daily supply of rice required for offerings to the god Adikesavaperumal temple at Thiruvattar.<sup>11</sup>

Aruvikkarai Krishna Temple inscription, engraved on the west and south walls of the temple, registers the gift of land made by certain private individuals called Narayanan – Kumaraswami and Raman-Manivarnan of Palakkottu in Thiruvithamkodu for the expenses of providing daily offerings of the *nali* of rice to God Purushottamattudevar at Aruvikkarai. The subjoined inscription in the same temple, engraved on the north wall of the central shrine, describes a gift of land by a certain Serikkandan – *Jataveda Bhattar* of Araiyanjer endowed as gift to God Purushottamattu Devar at Aruvikkarai for offerings and garlands to the deity.<sup>12</sup> One *tadi* of land called Avaniyar, 3 *ma* (in extent), under the *mekkanai* (west dam) which is cultivable for paddy by water from the Tachchanvilai in Mattur. This land of 3 *ma*, Tiruvikkiraman – Sankaran, a *variyan* of Mattur, took over for cultivation on *Karanmai* – tenure. Having (thus) secured (it), he promised to provide within the 'twelve feet time' before noon, one *nali* of rice required for the offerings to God, to remit the taxes current in the neighbourhood, to supply one garland daily for the God, and to receive the cooked rice offering. If this supply of rice failed, Purushottama and the *sabha* conjointly conducted the charity.<sup>13</sup>

Another inscription at the same temple belongs to *Kollam* 416 (A.D.1241) mentions that Tuppu – Narayanan, Tuppan – Sennan and Kandan – Tuppan and his brother of Karpakamangalam endowed the gift of lands (3 *ma*) for offerings to God Purushottama – deva at Aruvikkarai. Of this 3 *ma* of land, 3 *kalam* of paddy was to give as the produce share for the expense of providing (one) *nali* of rice daily to the God. If this supply failed once, double the quantity (at default) was measured and the expenses conducted. If it failed, it was twice.

Thiruvattar inscription belongs to *Kollam* 442 (A.D.1266) records Arasu Kesavan of Devancheri made some gift of land for the expense of providing certain specified offerings to God Perumal who was pleased to lay at Thiruvattar.<sup>14</sup> Thirupantrikodu Siva temple inscription, engraved on the east wall of the *curru-mandapa*, registers a gift of land for *puja*, sacred offerings, to the temple of Thirupantrikodu.<sup>15</sup>

Inscription engraved on the *madappalli* (temple kitchen) of Subrahmaniaswamy temple at Kumarakoil dated *Kollam* 540, *Chittirai* 10, (A.D. 1365) records the gift of two lands by Ayyappan alias Subramani, son of Ayyappan from Kulikkodu to Sri Velayudha Perumal, the chief deity of the temple, for performing daily *pujas* with rice offering and two garlands. A fragmentary record of Krishnankoil Krishna temple, a suburb of

Keralapuram belongs to King Adityavarma Sarvanganatha dated *Kollam* 548 (A.D. 1372) mentions some gift of lands by *devakarmis* for the feedings of twelve Brahmans on *dvadasi* days in the temple.

A record of Travancore King Ravi Ravi Varma of *Kollam* 548 (A.D. 1373) registers the gift of land for feeding twelve Brahmans in the Thiruvaidaikodu temple during the *Visakham* annual festival.<sup>16</sup> Thiruvithamkodu Siva Temple inscription registers a gift of land for feeding twelve Brahmans in the Thiruvithamkodu temple during the *Visakham* annual festival.<sup>17</sup> The subjoined record engraved on three faces of slab set up in the compound of the Vishnu temple at Alvarkoil near Eraniel belongs to *Kollam* 578 (A.D. 1403) related to the performance of morning worship in the Siva temple at Sivagiri close by, for which some gift of land was made by the Travancore King Vira Kerala Marthandavarma Tiruvadi of *Kizhapperur*. The same temple inscription engraved on the stone set up in the yard seems to register a gift of land for offerings and lamps to the temple.<sup>18</sup>

An inscription engraved on the stone partly underground in the street called Thaliyal at Thiruvattar, records that Dattan Kandan of Mamballi gave *Tamaraitturutti Purayitam* for a perpetual lamp to be lighted in the temple of Adikesava Perumal of Thiruvattar and Thaliyal Mahadeva temple. Thiruvaidaikodu Siva temple inscription engraved on a rock on the southern side of the second *prakara* of the temple registers the gift of a piece of land in Kattimankodu in Kunmburkavu of *Nanjilnadu*, for offerings to the temple of Mahadeva of Thiruvaidaikkodu. The donor was Vira Pandya *Ankudivelan*. Padmanabhapuram inscription, dated to *Kollam* 670 (A.D. 1495), registers a gift of land to the Pillaiyar of Saalai Aham by Cheraman Perumal. He also donated a temple land for labording Saivaites as *Anjinan Pugalidam* (Refugee Centre). Padmanabhapuram inscription, dated *Kollam* 709 (A.D. 1533), portrays the installation of Kulasekhara Perumal Pillaiyar in Kalkulam Fort and also the gift of land for the same by Nayinar Ravivarman Siravoy Mutta Tampiran and his *Vaasal Kariyam*.<sup>19</sup>

Pannipakam inscription of *Kollam* 735 (A.D.1559) engraved on the granite pedestal of Nandikesvara in the temple of Mahadeva at Pannipakam in the Kalkulam taluk, registers a gift of land made to a *Nayinar* Alagan Ayyikutti for playing on the flute thrice daily in front of the God Mahadeva of Thirupannipakam temple.<sup>20</sup> Charodu inscriptions dated *Kollam* 748 (A.D. 1572) reveals the gift of lands including the land in Mukkalampadu to Pon Ayakudi Ravivarman by Nayinar Ravivarman Siravoy Muttavar. Thiruvaidaikkodu Siva temple inscription engraved in the south *prakara* of the temple belongs to *Kollam* 769 (A.D. 1593) deals with the temple grants. Padmanabhapuram Palace *Pujapperai* inscription dated *Kollam* 840

(A.D. 1664) mentions a gift of land by Ravi-Ravi of Thiruvattar for conducting *pujas* to Aachara Pillaiyar and Kalkulam Mahadeva Temple.<sup>21</sup>

An inscription, engraved on the store room of the front *mandapa* of Thirparappu Siva temple, dated *Kollam* 854, *Tai* 26, (A.D. 1679) describes the gift of land for the offering to the God by the glorious nature and name is compared to Virakeralanalloor Andichi's daughter, Ramanachi. His ancestors Pandiyanar, son of Nainar had already constructed a *kosalai madam* (holy shelter for cows) at the *Easana* (north-east) corner of the temple. In addition to the previous offering, this offering was also given in order to perform *pujas* to Sivapandy Aandar and Maheswara. The subjoined record, engraved in *vatteluttu* characters on the four sides of a stone setup in the middle of the *prakara* of the Siva temple at Thirparappu, mentions the names of a large number of fields which had apparently been donated to the temple. Charodu inscription reveals a gift of land including the land in Mukkalampadu and a gift of *Thirumukha* to Sri Padmanabhan of PooAyerkudi in *Tenkarainadu* by Nayinar Ravivarma Siravoy Muttavar, dated to *Kollam* 798 (A.D.1623).<sup>22</sup>

Kalliyankadu inscription of *Kollam* 864 (A.D. 1688) engraved in Tamil on the four sides of a pillar set up in the Bhagavati temple at Kalliyankadu registers the gift of some lands made by certain Cidambaram – Ilaiyanayinar for offerings and worship to the God Vinayaka set up by him in the *matha* of the village and named after his himself, Chidambara Vinayaka Pillaiyar. It also contains elaborate details of the lands given and by scales of expenditure to be met for the proper conduct of charity.

Siva temple inscription at Thiruvidaikkodu engraved on the rock embedded in the south *prakara*, exhibits the gift of some lands by Udaiyan-Ponnandi and Udaiyamangala – Nangai of Marudattur, a village in *Kurunadu* for certain offerings to the God and for feeding seven Brahmins in the temple during the *dvadasi* days of the first fortnight. The tax on these lands was ordered to be met by the persons supervising their cultivation. Padmanabhapuram Museum inscription engraved on a stone during the Travancore ruler dated *Kollam* 862 (A.D. 1687) deals with a gift of land for worship in the temple of the north street at Kalkulam by Tambi Iravi Sri Padmanabhan of Thiruvattar. Siva temple inscription in Thirparappu engraved on the four sides of a stone set up in the middle of the *prakara*, mentions the names of a large number of gifted fields which apparently belonged to the temple.<sup>23</sup>

Kadigaippattanam inscription, dated *Saka* 1629, *Kollam* 882 (A.D. 1706) mentions that one Sivanukkiniyan of Perumbarrappuliyur erected the *Sopana – Mandapa* of the temple of Karaikkandiswaram – Udaiya – Nayanar, had the purification ceremony performed, and gave two pieces of land for the expenses of 44 *panam* required for providing worship, *sribali*, sacred bath, music and sacred lamp in the temple, and for

special worship on *dvadasi* and *pradosham* days. The two individuals, Ichchakutti of Siddhamangalam and Sadaiyan of Kannamangalam took over these two bits of land for enjoyment on the stipulation that they had to provide for the above items of expenses. The tax of  $9\frac{1}{2}$  *panam* had to be met by the temple. The donor of the charity recorded in *Kollam* 882 belonged to the same family as the Sivanukkiniyan of *Kollam* 439, migrated from Chidambaram in the early days of the Chola occupations of South Travancore.

Padmanabhapuram inscription registers that *Chettu Velayudha Perumal Madhava Pillai* and *Thiru Neelakandan Maalai Pillai* of *Muttalaikurichi* donated lands to *Neelakandaswamy* temple for feeding two Brahmins and forming a flower garden all in *Charaikonam*, dated to *Kollam* 886 (A.D. 1710). Vishnu temple inscription at *Alvarkoil* near *Eraniel* seems to register a gift of land for offerings and lamps to the temple.<sup>24</sup>

Krishnankoil inscription of *Kollam* 887, (A.D. 1711) engraved on the walls of the *mandapa* in front of the central shrine of the *Krishnaswamy* temple at *Krishnankoil*, records that certain lands were gifted by a private individual called *Silayappilai – Ariyakutti*, to the temples of *Krishna – Vinnavar – Emberuman* and *Kulasekhara – Vinayaka Pillaiyar* at *Ravipuram* which were constructed about *Kollam* 830 (A.D. 1654) when *Nayinar* (King) *Ravi – Ravivarman* alias *Siraiyoy Mutta – Tambirananar* was the reigning king and that the donor secured from the king certain tax exemptions for these lands.<sup>25</sup>

An inscription on a slab set up at *Pudur* near *Thiruvithamkodu*, dated *Kollam* 894, (A.D. 1718) records that certain residents of *Putuvur* and *Palliccal* built an *ambalam* at *Putuvur* and presented lands for burning a lamp. *Adikesava Perumal* temple inscription at *Thiruvattar* records the grants of land for lamps and arrangements made for temple services. And *Subrahmanya* temple inscription at *Kumarakoil* dated *Kollam* 897, (A.D. 1721) registers gift of lands by *Pillaiyan – Alagiyan* for festivals, worship and offerings to God *Velayudha Perumal* of *Velvimalai* near *Brahmapuram*. *Thiruvidaikkodu Siva* temple inscription explains gift of some lands for the feeding of fifty four Brahmins during *dvadasi* days in the temple of *Kodambisvaramudaiya – Nayinar* at *Thiruvidaikkodu*. It was donated by *Peruman–Kandan*, the accountant of *Manavalakkurichi* in *Kadigaippattanam*, a village of *Kurunadu* which was a sub-division of *Rajaraja Tennadu*.<sup>26</sup>

Padmanabhapuram inscription of *Kollam* 907 (A.D. 1731) registers a gift of land for the *Ayanikulam* temple for *dvadasi* feeding.<sup>27</sup> *Subrahmanyaswamy* Temple inscription at *Kumarakoil* in *Kollam* 909 (A.D. 1733) records some gift of lands by *Perumal – Cempakaraman* of *Manavalakkurichi* near *Kadigaippattanam*, a village in *Rajaraja Tennadu* for offering and worship of the God *Velayudha Perumal* (*Subrahmanya*) of

Velvimalai. This inscription from the same temple, dated *Kollam* 910 (A.D.1735), seems to register some gift of land made by Adiccan Devan of Sevvalai. The subjoined Tamil inscription of *Kollam* 911 (A.D. 1735) engraved on a stone set up in a field in Kaviyallur near Valvachchakottam refers to some gift of land by Mallan-Kittinan. Thirunayinarkurichi Siva temple inscription of *Kollam* 931 (A.D. 1755) reveals the donation of land by Perumal of Pallikkal to Arasaradi Pillaiyar in Thirunayinarkurichi. Alur Chera Chola Pandya Mahadeva temple inscription in Kalkulam taluk records a gift of land for *Ushapuja* and offerings by Iccanan Piccan and Anainci maya Lakshmi.<sup>28</sup>

## Conclusion

Lands were donated by the rulers, royal family members, private individuals to the temple for various purposes. The donations and offerings are made to the gods in the temples for the happiness and prosperity of the devotee and his family.

## References

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- <sup>2</sup> Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy for 1973 – 74, p.62.
- <sup>3</sup> T.A.S., Vol. III, Part II, pp. 203 – 206.
- <sup>4</sup> R. Nagaswamy, *Kanyakumari Kalvettugal* (Tamil), Vol.IV, Chennai, 1979, S.No.1969/79.
- <sup>5</sup> By *Vrischika – Vilakku* is perhaps meant the light that had to be kept during the month of *Vrischika*, (middle of November to middle of December) i.e. *Karthigai*.
- <sup>6</sup> T.A.S., Vol. III, Part I, p. 79.
- <sup>7</sup> The term *Kavidi* applied to the donor shows that he was either an accountant or a minister, most probably the latter.
- <sup>8</sup> A. Seetharam Gurumurthy, *Kanyakumari District Inscriptions*, Vol.VI, Chennai, 2008, pp.88-89.
- <sup>9</sup> R. Vasudeva Poduval, *Travancore Inscriptions – A Topographical List*, Madras, 1990, p. 238.
- <sup>10</sup> T.A.S., Vol. VII, Part II, p.117.
- <sup>11</sup> Indian Archaeology, 1954-55, A Review, p.30.
- <sup>12</sup> R. Nagaswamy, *op.cit.*, S.No.1969/2.
- <sup>13</sup> T.A.S., Vol. VII, Part II, pp. 114-120.
- <sup>14</sup> R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op. cit.*, p. 292.
- <sup>15</sup> *Avanam*, Vol. 22, 2011, p.156.
- <sup>16</sup> K.V. Nayar and T.V. Mahalingam, *Selected Malayalam Inscriptions*, Madras, 1952, pp. 85 – 87.
- <sup>17</sup> M.Gopala Krishnan (ed), *Kanyakumari District Gazetteer*, Madras, 1995, pp. 75 – 76.
- <sup>18</sup> T.A.S., Vol. VI, Part I, p.29.
- <sup>19</sup> A. Seetharam Gurumurthy, *op. cit.*, pp. 162 – 165.
- <sup>20</sup> T.A.S., Vol. III, Part I, pp. 66 – 67.
- <sup>21</sup> T.A.S., Vol. V, part II, pp.127- 140.
- <sup>22</sup> *Avanam*, Vol.22, 2011, pp. 156-157.
- <sup>23</sup> T.A.S., Vol. VI, Part I, p. 76.
- <sup>24</sup> T.A.S., Vol. VII, Part I, p. 34.
- <sup>25</sup> R. Vasudeva Poduval, *op. cit.*, pp.260- 270.
- <sup>26</sup> T.A.S., Vol. V, Part II, pp. 149- 151.
- <sup>27</sup> R. Nagaswamy, *op.cit.*, S. No.1969/19.
- <sup>28</sup> A. Seetharam Gurumurthy, *op. cit.*, pp. 134 – 162.