

TAJUK

Hinduism: The History of Srī Mahā Māriyamman
Kōvil Devastānam .

OLEH

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Latihan Ilmiah

Bagi memenuhi Sebahagian
Daripada syarat syarat untuk
Ijazah Sarjana Muda Sastera
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SINOPSIS

Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam adalah sebuah kōvil yang menimbulkan minat ramai orang. Banyak faktor yang menarik perhatian orang ramai terhadap kuil ini, antaranya faktor ekonomi, politik, sosial dan ugama. Kajian ini mengandungi enam bab.

Bab I meliputi penerangan tentang pengenalan, tujuan dan bidang kajian ini. Perbincangan mengenai kaedah yang digunakan dan masalah yang dihadapi dalam kajian ini juga dibincangkan.

Bab II, adalah mengenai pertumbuhan kōvil-kōvil Hindu di Malaysia. Satu definisi ringkas tentang Hinduisme juga diberikan dan penerangan tentang struktur dan fungsi kuil juga diperkatakan.

Bab III adalah mengenai perkembangan sejarah Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam. Sejarah kōvil ini dan bagaimana ia diuruskan diperbincangkan dalam bab ini.

Dalam Bab IV, upacara-upacara dalam kōvil diberi perhatian. Satu penerangan yang lengkap diberikan berkaitan dengan berbagai pūjā yang dijalankan dalam kōvil ini. Peranan sami, penolong dan lain-lain kakitangan juga diperkatakan.

Bab V adalah mengenai perkembangan semasa Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam. Satu analisa tentang perkembangan kōvil ini dari awal hingga kehari ini diberikan. Perkara-perkara semasa juga disebutkan disini.

Dalam Bab VI, sumbangan kōvil dianalisa dan beberapa cadangan tentang cara membaiki peranan mereka juga telah dikemukakan. Ini adalah untuk memastikan Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam akan tetap menjadi satu tauladan kepada kōvil-kōvil Hindu yang lain.

SYNOPSIS

Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam is a temple which arouses interest from many people. Many factors leads to this interest, which could be economic, political, social and religious. This research consists of six chapters.

Chapter I contains information on introduction, aims and scope of this study. Various methods were used and problems that were faced during the research are also touched in this chapter.

Chapter II, deals with the growth of Hindu temple in Malaysia. A brief defination on Hinduism is given and structure and functions of a temple is also mentioned here.

Chapter III, is about the historical development of Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam. The history of the temple and how it is being managed is given.

In chapter IV, rituals of the temple are given due importance. A thorough explanation is given on matters pertaining to the various pūjās conducted by the temple and the role of the temple priest, Paṇṭāram and other staff are also highlighted.

Chapter V deals with the current development of the temple. An analysis on how the temple had developed from its early days to the present days is given. The current events are also touched here.

Chapter VI, the temples contribution is analysed and some suggestive remarks had been given on how to improve their roles. This is to ensure that Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam will remain as a model Hindu temple forever.

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CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of Research

Religion greatly influences the ways of life, thoughts and behaviour of man. It is the only provider of answers to various short comings or problems in life that needs to be looked at from a more supernatural perspective.

In this academic exercise, the writer will attempt to observe an important part of Hinduism, which is the Hindu temple, from a sociological approach. The sight of a Hindu temple arouses interest in the manner in which it was built, the architectural designs, and the various sculptures of Hindu deities which are very significant to the Hindus or to any visitors of the temple.

The writer choosed to study on Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam because this temple is the most prestigious temple in Malaysia, and has been looked upon as the Model Hindu temple in Malaysia. Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam has attained its power through the financial position it possess. If looked

very closely, the involvement of politics in the temple's affair is very great. This brought many controversial ideas about how a temple should carry out its religious role. The temple although has been praised for its contribution, has also been a subject of criticism. Personal opinions and mass media views shows that the temple has been attracting a lot of attention from the people. Most of this views revealed dissatisfaction of the public about the temple's management.

The climax of all the happening was the Mahā Kumpāpiṣēkam ceremony, where a total of \$1.25 million were spent on this affair. This ceremony which is celebrated once in every 12 years was very elaborately celebrated, where the most unusual event was the sprinkling of flowers from a helicopter on the temple. This ceremony raised a lot of question from the public towards the temple.

All these interested the writer who wanted to know more about this temple and also its function.

The writer also wanted to know the role Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam has in promoting the

Hindu religion. So it is very necessary to also dig up the history of the temple and how it developed from time into a popular religious institution. The writer too touched on the rituals of the temple and how it is being performed.

Lastly, this academic exercise is hoped to give a better picture of the existence of Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam.

1.2 Methods Used For The Study

The field work for this study was carried out between May to October 1987. No questionnaires was used for this study. The methods used was participant observation and interviews with key-informant.

The writer had informal interviews with the staff of the temple, the priest and the paṇṭāram. Usually the informal interviews were done in the mornings when the priest and paṇṭāram are free. The writer too observed some of the rituals performed, like pūjā, apiṣēkam and caṅkāpiṣēkam.

Many informal interviews were held with people who were well versed in the temple's affairs. All these interviews were done in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya. As soon as an interview was conducted, or an observation made, it was immediately recorded for analysis later. A tape recorder was also used for one interview with the priest about the rituals performed. However, it was mainly through the informal interviews that the writer was able to gather a great deal of information

Magazine like "Hindu" and "Kumpāpiṣēkam Malar" of Srī Mahā Māriyamman, too have helped the writer to gather much information relating to this study. The writer too managed to take some photographs of the temple structure and the puja ceremony.

1.3 Limitations

While doing this study, the writer came across many obstacles which delayed the work.

Her main problems were difficulties in meeting the key-informant, who might have promised to give an interview, but never turn up at the time. She

also had difficulties getting information because there were a lot of confidential dealings in the temple's affair. Thus the writer failed to get some informations. This too unabled the writer to get her informations from the temple staff.

The writer too had problems in her status as a student. The reluctance of the temple officials to give co-operation were due to this factor. She too had difficulties in talking to the priest, because he was always frequented by people who come for the astrology service he provides. So many times, the writer had to come back without getting any information at all. Her visits to the temple and her informal interview with the key-informants were also done when her course was going on.

The writer too did not have any previous work on the similar subject matter to refer to.

Chapter II

2. GROWTH OF HINDU TEMPLE

2.1 What Is Hinduism

The term Hinduism is derived from the civilization of the Hindus on the land of River Sindhu (Indus). A more appropriate name for Hinduism is "Sanāthana Dharma" meaning "The Eternal Religion". The origins of Hinduism go back 4000 years. Its 315 million followers believe it is the fountain head of all religion. In theory, Hinduism is the simplest of all religions, it boast no central authority and no hierachy. In practice it is so complex, it has one God and it also has 330 million gods¹.

In Hindu religion, there are different sections like Saivism, Vaishnavism and Saktism. But all Hindus have three great beliefs, that is Reincarnation, Law of Karma and that God is omnipresent and exists in all things.

2.3 Pati

Of the three entities, Pati stands out as the supreme spirit who is the source of all, Independent, Conscious, Omniscient, Omnipotent, All perfect and the Embodiment of Grace. Pati denotes God and he is the protector, so, God protects the soul.

Siva's function is five-fold, Siva's cosmic dance is the embodiment and manifestation of the five activities of creation. They are:-

- (i) Creation (sṛṣṭi)
- (ii) Protection or maintenance (sthiti)
- (iii) Withdrawal or Destruction (alittal)
- (iv) Veiling or illusion (tirōpavam)
- (v) Granting of grace (anugraha)

According to the tenets of Saiva Siddhānta, creation (sṛṣṭi) is the creation of the body senses, place in which to live and objects of enjoyment for the soul according to its past births. The soul is associated with these objects which are created so that it will be able to free itself from the egoism (āṇavam), past deeds (karma) and the ignorance that binds it to the material objects (māyai).

Sthiti means the meeting out of experience according

With the veiling or illusion (tirōpavam) God conceals from the souls the knowledge of their actions in the previous births. It also means, rest given to the souls. By making the soul take more births, God makes the souls as well as the three malas become tired and powerless and the tired soul begins to think of God and makes an effort to reach Him.

Finally, there is the grace (anugraha) of God which grants salvation to those souls who are pure and free from bondage to the malas.

Of the five functions, the first three are related to the body and material objects, while the last two are related to the souls.

2.4 Pacu

Pacu refers to the soul in its state of bondage. The soul is intelligent and capable of knowledge, but its knowledge is limited. When the soul is enveloped in the darkness of ignorance caused by its bondage, to the three impurities (mala), it does not see, but it sees when God like the lamp, illuminates its vision and understanding.

2.5 Pācam

The term means chains or nets that binds. It binds the souls so that it prevents them from attaining stainless state. Pācam is made of three strands, which are egoism, (āṇavam), past deeds (kaṇmam, karma) and the material principle (māyai).

The general Hindu believes that there is only one God, but He performs three functions, which are creation, protection and destruction, which is associated with the world of matter.

In performing these three functions, God is pictured as Brahmā, the creator, Viṣṇu, the protector and Śiva/Rudra the destroyer. Of these, Brahmā has no temple of worship. Thus of the three, only Śiva and Viṣṇu are worshipped in temples. Besides these forms, God is also worshipped as Śakti or Mother Goddess, with various names like (Pārvathi, Durga).

2.6 Hindu Temple

A Hindu temple is the home of the God. It is the most sacred place as it is the abode of the God. Temple serves a vital purpose in Hinduism because

the daily life of every Hindu is closely associated with Temple worship. The oldest temples were located either on river banks, sea-shores, mountain tops or slopes, in caves or under trees with spreading branches and thick foliage. Only later were large temples built in accordance with the Saiva-Agamic tradition⁴.

2.7 Structure Of A Hindu Temple

A Saiva temple is erected by expert temple craftsmen called "sthapathis".

The temples vary greatly in size and complexity. In a small village, or town, the temple may be very small indeed. It may appear to be a little more than a wayside shrine. Yet these temples have significant meanings for the villager, for to him this temple is the locus of his worship. On the other hand, Hindu temples in some instances are marked by their large size and elaborate architecture. The temple is devoted not to the worshipper, but to a God. The essential requirement, therefore of every temple is that it have a vimāna (shrine) which in turn has a garbha grha (womb house or little cell), in which the

god in the form of an image or some other representation is placed. The temple often times has grown from its earliest form and most basic requirement. In some, there is a second garbha-grha which is provided for the god's consort.

A reasonably large temple built in the shaivite or agamic tradition is surrounded by walls and has a tall gōpuram called the rājagōpuram. It reminds people of the temple and of God even from a distance. On this gōpuram may be seen all manner of objects and beings-gods, semi divine beings, asuras, human beings, birds and beasts. There are things that remind one of goodness and virtue, and others that depict evil and that remind one of goodness and virtue and others that depict evil and vice. The gōpuram has many tiers or levels, each with an entrance. These tiers are always to be found in odd numbers. If there are three, they are said to represent the souls' state of waking, dreaming and deep sleep, if there are five, they symbolise the five senses, if there are seven they symbolise the five senses plus the mind and intelligence.



PHOTO 1 : ENTRANCE: GÖPURAM



PHOTO 2 : ENTRANCE: THE LOWEST LEVEL OF
THE GÖPURAM

2.8 The Significance of a Hindu Temple Structure

Though each tier has an entrance, a devotee may enter the temple only through the main entrance at the ground level. This shows that though the soul has many states and many sources of knowledge, only the mind becomes useful in knowing and realising God. All other sense organs become inactive and may experience joy of knowing him only when the mind knows Him.

The conception of the temple as a symbol of the body is noticeable in the structure of the temple. It is like a person lying on his back with his head and trunk touching the ground, but the legs raised at a right angle to the body. The raised leg is the gopuram while the body is the temple area.

2.9 Entering the Temple

Before a person enters the temple, he washes his hands, and feet, rinses his mouth and sprinkles water over his head as an act of purification.

...15/-

The teppakulam of the old temples and the taps in modern temples serve this purpose. Passing the courtyard and approaching the garbhagrham, he would first come to the flag staff. It represents the backbone in the body having 32 joints and the section above the flag is divided into three sections representing the desires of man which may be summarised as the desire for gold (wealth), land (property) and women (physical pleasures).

At the beginning of a festival, the flag with the deity's symbol is hoisted to show that the celebrations have begun. It is also the forerunner of the deity's procession outside the temple. But essentially, it symbolises the pācam that binds the souls.

Immediately after the flag post is the sacrificial platform. Though no animal sacrifices are offered in temples, it is the place where man sacrifices the bonds that fetter him. It is at this place that he prostrates himself before God. While he does so, he sheds all the thoughts and emotions that are associated with his lower nature. Of the three guṇas, rajas and tamas are sacrificed at the altar so that only sattva guṇa remains and the devotee becomes purer and better person.

Next to the sacrificial altar is the vahana of the deity. For Śiva, it is a bull, for Gaṇeśa a rat, for Murugaṇ a peacock and for Śakti it is a lion. Whatever the vāhana, it faces the deity within the garbhagrāham with its back to the entrance and the flag staff. This is symbolic of the soul and the complete attention it should focus on God, forsaking the bonds that bind him to the universe.

The devotee goes round the temple slowly with his right side to the deity and passes round the vāhana and the sacrificial altar as well. It is improper to go between the deity and the vāhana for it is equals to being an obstacle to the soul's devotion to God. He goes round the temple three times and this is said to mean that each time he does so he gives up one of his desires so that by the end he has purified himself by giving up the desire for all the three things mentioned above. It is also said to mean that the devotee offers to God his body, his material wealth and finally his soul.

When he stands before the deity, like His Vāhana, he sees only God. The garbhagrāham is usually dark without any light. It is totally walled on all the three sides and there are no windows to admit air or

even sunlight. Infact, in the older temples in South India, this part of the temple is dark and we cannot see the deity without the lighted camphor held by the priest. This is symbolic of the darkness of ignorance and anava that veils us and prevents us from knowing God within us. Only when the guru or spiritual teacher instructing us holds the light of true spiritual knowledge, do we get to see Him.

2.10 Temples in Malaysia

Temples dedicated to Śiva, his consort and sons are more numerous than those dedicated to Viṣṇu and his incarnation. In Malaysia because Indians of South Indian origin are more numerous than those of North Indian origin. The worship of Śiva is more popular among the tamils, whereas the worship of Viṣṇu is characteristic of the Hindus of North India, like the Gujeratis, Sindhis and Maharatis.

In Malaysia, temples are usually dedicated to:-

- (i) Devi
- (ii) Śiva
- (iii) Gaṇēsa

- (iv) Murukan
- (v) Viṣṇu
- (vi) Rāma
- (vii) Muniyandi

One Hindu temple is dedicated to a particular deity and this is known as the Moolasthānam deity or deity in the sanctum of the temple. It is customary to have a number of other Saiva deities also installed in this temple, but the Moolasthānam deity takes pride of place in the temple pūjā and ritual. If the principal deity in the sanctum of the temple is Siva, then we refer to this temple as a Sivan Temple, if Gaṇēsa or Gaṇapati, is the principal deity, then it is a Gaṇēsa or Gaṇapati temple and so on.

2.11 Functions of Temples

Temples play an important role to a Hindu's life. It not only exist as centres for public worship, but they also form centres of religious learning and cultural performance. In big temples, there are special sections concentrating on the spread of the scriptural knowledge among the Hindu devotees. They organise religious classes, talks and cultural

performances like the classical Indian dance called bharata-nāṭyam. They undertake to print books, pamphlets, ritual calendar etc on Hinduism and thus keep the classical Hindu tradition going. The various Hindu temple festivals provide occasions for cultural performances, recital of devotional hymns, the enactment of puranic stories at festivals and the study of religious text.

The daily pūjās and worship in the temple too, involves all the five senses of man. Entering the temple, he sees with his eyes the forms of the Lord statues and paintings of Him, the beautiful flowers and the āraṭi. With his ears, he hears the sound of the bells and the conch, the music of the drum and the nāṭasvaram, the mantras (pañcapurāṇam) recited by the priest and the devotional songs sung in His praise. The nose smells the fragrance of the various things used in apiseka like the saffron and rose water, flowers, the sacred ash, sandal, incense, camphor and joss-sticks. The hands get to feel the holy ash, sandal and the holy water (tīrttam) and the tongue gets the taste of tīrttam and the praṇāṁ that is offered.

Besides the five senses, worship in the temple also involves the body, speech and mind. While the hands are held in prayer, the legs go round the temple and the body falls prostrate before Him. The mouth sings or utter words of praise and His name. Then while sitting in a corner, the mind dwells on Him.

Thus directing the senses, in the right path is the best way to control them and worshipping in the temple is one sure way of doing this.

Footnotes:

1. Louis Renou - The Nature of Hinduism
2. Antoine R. - Religious Hinduism,
presentation and appraisal
3. Nadarajah D - Strength of Shaivism (Pg. 51)
4. Ibid - Page 93

Chapter Three

3. THE HISTORY OF SRĪ MAHĀ MĀRIYAMMAN KŌVIL DEVASTĀNAM

3.1 Historical Development

The Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, the subject of this study, is one of the most prestigious and affluent Hindu temple in Malaysia. Situated in Kuala Lumpur, along Jalan Bandar, this temple has recently become a model Hindu Temple in the country on a number of aspects for the South Indian, Tamil speaking Hindus.

The history of Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, began way back in the 19th Century, when the Indian migration took place. About 80% of the Indian immigrants to Malaya were Hindus. When they came, they brought along their customs, traditions and religious beliefs too. They brought along with them the deities they worshipped and who guards and blesses them. In the plantations where they settled, the management had temples built for them, to establish a homely environment. An ancient Tamil adage said: "Do not settle in a land where there is no temple".

It was more difficult to practice the religion in the urban areas. However, in some towns where there were more Indian concentration, temples and shrines soon began to flourish. Later, the increasing migration of educated Indians in the first two decades of the 20th century, led to some determined attempts to form well organised temples in urban areas. Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam was one of the temples which was built at that time too. When the concentration of Indians became greater, they all felt the need to have a place to practice their religious beliefs.

Many of the Indians who migrated, did not bring along their family thus they felt a desire to have a holy place where they can be in peace while thinking and praying for their family back in their homeland. This brought to the erection of a shrine at the Railway Goodset in 1873. The man who gathered all the Hindus and got their cooperation and finally built the shrine was Mr. Kaayeroganam Pillai. He was a leader for the Indians in Kuala Lumpur. It was his family that founded Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam. His family was very wealthy and influential in Kuala Lumpur and was controlling the temple in its early stages by their

descendants. After sometime, its control appears to have been vested in the community of worshippers, collectively called ūrar. A pancayat elected by the ūrar managed the temples affairs, but the descendants of the founders had considerable influence in management and finance.

So the temple authorities managed to get a location for the temple from the Chinese Chief, Mr. Yap Ah Loy, in 1875. This is the present place of Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam. In 1885, a small hut was built for Goddess Srī Māriayamman. In 1887, plans to attempt to improve the temple with concrete and brick structure became a reality. It was during this year that Mr. Kaayeroganam Pillai passed away, while he was in India. His son, Mr. Thamboosamy Pillai continued his father's good work.

On 9th January 1888, the Sultan of Selangor issued a land title No. 1156 for the land which was actually under the name of Mr. Thamboosamy Pillai. In 1889, the first Kumpāpiṣēkam was held. The construction of the temple completed within a year with the help of public donations. At this time, Mr. Thamboosamy Pillai was appointed as the temple 'stanigar'. He

became the pioneer of the temple. He was also the leader for the Indians. When he died in 1902 in Singapore at the age of 53, the temple management was taken over by Mr. R. Thuraisamy, Mr. M. Kumarasamy Pillai, Mr. R. V. Suppiah Pillai, Mr. Vaithilingam Thevar, Mr. V. Subramaniam Pillai, Mr. Visvalingam Pillai and others who together formed a group. Later, Mr. K. Thamboosamy's son, Mr. T. Parimanam Pillai, took over the role as the stanigar from his father. In 1917, he too died, and Mr. K. Thamboosamy's youngest son, Mr. K.T. Kanapathy Pillai became the stanigar and Mr. Kumarasamay Pillai became the assistant stanigar, as Mr. K.T. Ganapathy was still a minor.

In 1923, there was a conflict between the temple management and the public pertaining to the management of the temple funds. The temple's income and expenditure statement reflected a sum of \$17,000/- and \$11,000/- apportioned to Mr. Thamboosamy Pillai and Mr. Kumarasamy Pillai respectively, without the knowledge of the public. The dispute relected the disagreement between two factions. On one side there were those who were in effective control over the temple's affairs and on the other side there were those who sought to challenge the power of the other

group, through appeals to the ūrar*. Heated arguments between the factions were unavoidable and inconclusive. No settlement was reached. Understandably, this led to squabbles among its trustees for the control of the affairs of the temple.

Before Mr. K. Thamboosamy Pillai passed away, he handed over the management and accounts to Mr. Kumarasamy Pillai. Even after 40 years of existence, there was no proper management of the temple. An article by Mr. R. V. Suppiah Pillai on the temple affairs, opened the eyes of the public, who then began to take an interest to ensure the proper functioning of the temple. Even when the public became aware and began to participate actively, they were threatened and made to suffer.

The Kuala Lumpur Maha Jana Sangam too sent many notices and petitions to Mr. Kumarasamy Pillai who, according to Mr. Suppiah Pillai, did not take any notice of the people's request. So the public had no other choice but to take it to the court. The case was only taken to the court after 6 years of disputes as Mr. Suppiah Pillai was trying to settle in a more diplomatic manner than to take it to Court. The case

was taken to Kuala Lumpur Supreme Court Civil Suit No. 58 in 1929 by Mr. Suppiah Pillai and Mr. Ana Velayutham Pillai. The defendants were Mr. Kumarasamy Pillai, Madam Alamaloo @ Noovi, Mr. V. Subramaniam Pillai, Mr. K.T. Ganapathi Pillai, Mr. R.D. Ramasamy Pillai, Mr. N.V. Visvalingam Thevar, Mr. Karuppiah Thevar, Mr. V.O.K.S. Kariah Pillai and Mr. E.K. Ramalingam Nayakaran.

The Court declared that the property and funds of the Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam in High Street, Kuala Lumpur, the Gaṇēsar Temple, Old Pudu Road, Kuala Lumpur and the Subramaniam Temple, Batu Caves were to be named as a charitable trust for the benefit of the Upayakārars of Māriyamman Temple. An order was issued emunerating in detail the manner in which the temple management should be carried out. It also ordered that Mr. Thamboosamy Pillai and his descendants should be accorded the title of stanigar, meaning founder in perpetuity.

Since 1930, the temple was managed by the public. South Indian Tamils, who were the Upayam Natanmai, formed a Board of Management. Immediately after the court issued the order, there were only 12 upayams in the list. Each upayam is controlled by one occupation group which also can be said as a caste group.

Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam was also a centre for political movements during the war days. In 1942, when the Japanese invaded Malaya, Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam Temple became the centre for both the Indian National Congress and the Indian National Army (INA). Both these bodies represented the British Government and its members were all Indians. As the officials of these bodies were very involved in the temple affairs, the temple management felt very obliged to give them shelter.

In September 1945, the British came to Malaya again. In 1946, the Military took over the rule. During this period, there was an immediate need to form a political party for the benefit of the Indians. This resulted in the formation of the Malaya Indian Congress (MIC) in 1946. When the MIC was formed, Mr. John Theevy became its first president. The Indian Independence League (IIL), which was formed during the Japanese occupation, became the base for this party. The INA officials and members too were involved in the formation of MIC.

But MIC had no support from any strong Indian organisation because there wasn't any. The British were constantly observing the activities of the INA

and IIL officials as they were former prisoners during the Japanese occupation. As such, only Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam Temple, which seemed the strongest Indian organisation, offered to assist them by way of providing financial assistance and also by providing them a room to be used as an office. The temple gave its sincerest assistance as it was interested in the Indian affairs of the country.

The temple has always given its support and assistance to the MIC officials as a whole. This tradition has been maintained even till now.

3.2 Board of Management

The Management of the temple makes arrangement for the regular services in all the temples - Srī Gaṇēsar Temple, Srī Subramaniyam Temple, Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam, conduct of festivals, Kumpāpiṣēkam and other purification ceremonies. Looking after the needs of the crowds, safe custody of jewels, full-proof security arrangements to prevent thefts, of sculptures, providing for the comforts of the devotees, a problem of health, sanitation, maintenance of existing buildings, construction of new buildings, administration of a number of institution (e.g. Appar Tamil School, Batu Caves Tamil School).

The Board of Management appoints and controls three types of functionaries:-

- i) Those engaged in purely spiritual services like conducting the worship, chanting mantrams, and reciting and sacred hymms.
- ii) Those employed in administration and in maintenance of accounts.
- iii) Those who render various kinds of services in non-religious institutions of the Devastānam.

The Board of Management consist of not more than three representatives of each Upayam elected at the Biennial General Meeting (BGM) of the Upayakārars of each Upayam. The Board of Management will meet at least once in every three months. At least one half of the members of the Board of Management must be present for its proceedings to be valid and constitute a quorum. An emergency meeting of the Board of Management may be called upon giving two days notice. The first meeting of the new Board of Management will be held not later than the last day of Kārtikkai of every second year. Any member other than a Trustee, who absents himself from three consecutive meetings of the Board of

Management or Executive Committee without reasonable cause will render himself liable to be removed forthwith from his representative capacity and his membership of the Board of Management and Executive Committee. The Board of Management shall take immediate steps to arrange for the election by the Upayakārars of a representative in a place of the member so removed.

If the Board of Management considers that any of the representatives elected by the Upayakarars is an undesirable person, the Board of Management have powers to direct the Upayakārars to elect another representative to take the place of the person so considered.

3.3 Upayakarars

It is stated that each upayam shall consist of not less than thirty upayakārars, who shall have paid an annual subscription of two dollars each. An upayakārar who has not paid his subscription for that year shall not be entitled to participate in or vote at any meeting of the Upayakārars of the Upayam. The Upayam has to pay \$30/- annually to the charity. The Biennial General Meeting (BGM) of each upayam shall be

held every 2nd year, beginning of Puratāci month and end of Aipeci month. The quorum at the BGM is 15 and voting by show of hands. At the BGM, upayakārars shall elect three members who shall represent the upayam at the Board of Management. The three representatives shall select one of their members as Upayam Nātanmai who shall preside at all meetings of the Upayakārars of the Upayam. The Nātanmai's form the Executive Committee.

3.4 Chairman

The new Board of Management will elect one of their members as Chairman at the first meeting. The Chairman will preside at all meetings of the Board of Management and Executive Committee. He too have a casting vote and will sign the minutes of each meeting. He too will sign all cheques on behalf of the charity and superintend the general administration of the affairs of the charity. If the chairman is not present for any meeting, the Board of Management will appoint one of their member as Chairman Protem.

3.5 Trustees

The trustees of the Charity consist of not more than

six persons elected at a meeting of the Board of Management and one additional person elected at the meeting of the Upayakārars of the Vaikāsi Visāka Upayam. So the total number of the trustees shall not be more than seven. At the end of every three years, the Trustees will go out of office, but are eligible for re-appointment. At the end of every three year period, new Trustees will be appointed by the Board of Management after an election by ballot. All the movable and immovable property will be vested in the Trustees.

3.6 Secretary

The Board of Management may appoint and will be at liberty to remunerate a secretary. In appointing a secretary, the Board of Management shall prefer one having an adequate knowledge of the Tamil and English languages. The Secretary has to attend all meetings of the Board of Management, the Executive Committee and of the Trustees and keep a record of their proceedings.

3.7 Treasurer and Auditors

Every second year at the first meeting of the new

Board of Management, one of the Executive members will be elected as the Treasurer. It will be the duty of the Treasurer to keep a correct and up-to-date account of the receipts and disbursements. He will be responsible for their correctness and will submit the same at each meeting of the Board of Management. Similarly, at the first meeting of the Board of Management, two members of the Board of Management shall be appointed to be Auditors whose duty will be to audit the Treasurer's accounts every month and to verify and sign the statements of accounts which the Treasurer submits to the Board of Management.

Every year, he prepares estimates of income and expenditure of the Charity for the ensuing year.

3.8 Accounts and Audit

Every year the Board of Management will with the assistance of the Treasurer, Auditors and the Trustees, prepare the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Charity for the proceeding year. Every year, there will be appointed licensed auditors to make further audit of these accounts. The accounts of the Charity for the proceeding year will be printed and published before the last day of vaikasi of the following year.

3.9 Stānigar

Every stanigar will remain such during his lifetime and will be entitled only to those rights and privileges heretofore attached to the title and honour of stanigar such as Tīrttam, Tirunīr and Kālan̄ci. It is also a strict rule of conduct that he does not interfere in the affairs of the management of the Charity. The same applies for the role of Dharmakarta.

3.10 Quorum

At all meetings of the Board of Management fifteen members present shall form a quorum. At all meetings of the Executive Committee, ten shall form a quorum.

3.11 Committees

At the first meeting of the new Board of Management, the Board of Management will appoint and determine the duties of the Religious Committee, the Education Committee, the Information Committee, the Maintenance and Works Committee, the Crematorium and Burial Committee and the Library Committee. Each committee will consist of a Member in Charge appointed by the

Board of Management and eight other members nominated by the Member in Charge from among the members of the Board of Management. Every committee will meet at least once in three months and three members will form a quorum. The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer will be Ex-Officio Members of every committee.

3.12 Religious Committee

The Religious Committee will prepare the Annual Calender of Events, maintain an accurate record of all festivals, celebrations and other functions held at the Temple, superintend the duties of all staff directly involved in the conduct of daily prayers, be responsible for the cleanliness and proper maintenance of all shrines and deities of the temple.

3.13 Education Committee

The Member in Charge of the Education Committee will be the Chairman of the Board of Managers of every school under the control and management of the Charity and will also act as the Secretary of the Scholarship Committee of the Charity. The Education Committee will also make periodic visits to the

schools and report to the Board, be responsible for the proper maintenance, upkeep and cleanliness of the schools and school buses. The Education Committee too handles the management of Appar and Batu Caves Tamil School.

3.14 Maintenance and General Works Committee

The Maintenance and General Works Committee will be responsible for all repair, renovation, maintenance and other capital works in or about the temples and institutions under the control and management of the Board of Management and at Batu Caves for the annual Taipūcam Festival. The Committee will also be responsible for calling and awarding tenders and will generally superintend the execution of the works.

3.15 The Crematorium and Burial Grounds Committee

The Crematorium and Burial Grounds Committee will be responsible for the proper maintenance, upkeep and cleanliness of all hearses and burial grounds under the control of the Charity and recommend to the Board of Management on the suitability of

candidates for appointments such as care takers of the crematorium and burial grounds, hearse drivers etc. The Committee too will have an accurate register of all cremations and burials carried out.

3.16 Information Committee

The Information Committee will issue all press releases circulars and other literature on behalf of the Charity and maintain an accurate record of all such press release, press cuttings and other statements affecting the Charity. The Committee will also maintain a proper album of photographs of the important festivals and celebrations and be responsible for press, radio and television coverage.

3.17 Library Committee

The Library Committee will maintain an accurate record of all books, periodicals, magazine, souvenir programmes, circular, publications and leaflets published on distributed by the Charity or any of its Upayams. The Library Committee will

recommend to the Board of Management on the suitability of books and other periodicals to be added to the Library.

Footnote:

* urar - public

...39/-

...40/-

Chapter 4

4. RELIGIOUS ASPECTS - RITUALS

4.1 Goddess Sri Mahā Māriayamam

In Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam , the principal deity is Māriayamman. Among the village goddess, the most common is Māriayamman, the goddess of infections diseases, particularly of small pox. In her dance of frenzy, Māriayamman throws off pearls which, should they alight on anyone, produce small pox or chicken pox.

Māriayamman is a goddess of South India. Whitehead H. - writes "One of the deities worshipped in almost every village in Tamil country is Māriayamma or Māri the goddess of small pox"¹. Miss M.M. Frost observes: "In time of epidemic the goddess Māri must be propitiated with vows and gifts"². In villages, respect amounting almost to reverence is paid to a person affected with smallpox, for it is generally believed that the goddess herself has taken possession of such person.

In Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam temple



PHOTO:3: LORD MURUKAN



PHOTO 4: GARBAGRHAM

devotees who suffer from smallpox, make vows to Goddess Pēcāiyamman to offer rice porridge as 'annatanam' to the public. The vows are fulfilled when the patient is cured. It is also believed that the patient himself/herself must serve the rice porridge to the people.

4.2 Temple Worship

Temple worship is divisible into two main categories; public worship and private worship³. Public worship is said to be performed for the well being of the world. This worship can be classified into daily pūjās called nittiya pūcaikal, special pūjās called viṣēsa pūcaikal and annual festivals called Tiru-vila. Whereas the private worship normally known in Tamil temple as arcaṇai, is performed by or for an individual devotee and is intended to benefit him or her alone. Public worship is naturally considered far more important, for the priest in Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam Temple, for its beneficiary is the entire community.

4.3 Pūjās

Pūjā means worship of the gods and their images with



PHOTO 5: PŪJĀ: THE PRIEST SHOWING THE TĪPAM



PHOTO:6: PŪJĀ: RITUALS BEING PERFORMED
AT THE PALI-PEETAM



PHOTO 7: PŪJĀ: DEVOTEES PRAYING



PHOTO 8: PŪJĀ: RITUALS BEING PERFORMED FOR
THE NARAKIRAKAṆKAL

proper ceremonies. It is made to all the principle divinities and while the ceremonies observed at it are always the same, the mantras or forms of prayer vary. Every pūjā consists of four acts and four kinds of offerings which are:-

- i) The Apīṣeka - The holy anointing
- ii) The Tūpa - burning of the incense and waving of the lights
- iii) The Naivēttiyam - food offering
- iv) The Alāṅkāra - decoration

Besides their value in propitiating the deities, rituals have thus a physical and psychological effect. These two functions of worship are inseparable. A ritual is a form of magic art through which, with the help of sounds, forms, rhythms, gestures, flowers, light, incense and offering, the mind of the worshipper is carried away from its material preoccupations toward a world of divine beauty while the deity also enchanted is brought nearer to him.

There are 16 types of Tīpam used for Mahāmāriyaman. They are:-

- 1) Naivēttiyaṃ - Food offerings
- 2) Alāṅkāra Tīpam
- 3) Nākatīpam
- 4) Rishiba Tīpam
- 5) Miruka Tīpam
- 6) Panca Tīpam
- 7) Panca Tīpam
- 8) Natchatira Tīpam
- 9) Mēru Tīpam
- 10) Vipūti (Sacred Ash)
- 11) Mirror
- 12) Kudai (Umbrella)
- 13) Sāmaram
- 14) Viājanam
- 15) Visiri (Fan)
- 16) Surutti

The Naivēttiyaṃ for Goddess Mahāmāriyamman differs each day;

Sunday - Payasam (Sweet Porridge)

Monday - White Sweet Rice

Tuesday - Ghee Rice

Wednesday - Black Sugar Sweet Rice

Thursday - Sour Milk Rice

Friday - White Rice

Saturday - Black Peas with Rice

4.4 The Daily Worship

The Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam opens at 6.00 a.m. to 9.30 p.m. The daily worship comprises three separate "periods of worship" (kāla), each taking 30-45 minutes to complete. The three are:-

- (i) Kālaip-pūcai (morning) beginning at 7.30 a.m.
- (ii) Uccik-kāla pūcai at 12.30 p.m.
- (iii) Mālaip-pūcai at 5.30 p.m.

Usually, there is more crowd during the mālaip-pūcai. Each of the pūjā is meant for making offerings to the deities and extend salutations to them for the general welfare of the devotees as a whole. Each pūjā is accompanied by the recital of sanskrit mantrams and the traditional temple music band called nātasvaram and mēlavāttiyam. Before performing the pūjā the priest or worshipper washes and adorns himself with the sacred ashes on his body. Then he approaches the image of the gods, with devout gestures, he undresses them and performs the apīṣēkam.

4.5 Apisekam

On an ordinary day, he uses only milk and water to wash the images. But for a special day, he uses more items. It also differs from one god to another. For Goddess Māriayamman, they use extra items like turmeric. The procedure for an apiṣēkam are as follows. Firstly, the priest applies sesame seed oil on the image of Māriayamman. He then bathes her in water, that is mixed with Apiṣēka Kootu and Pachai Karpuram. Next he bathes her with turmeric and followed by rice flour mixed with water. After that with milk, followed by sour milk, sugar cane juice, coconut water, paṇcāmirtham. Paṇcāmirtham is made from 5 fruits, mainly from jackfruit, dates, bananas, mangoes, grapes, honey and black sugar. After Paṇcāmirtham they bathe her with fruit juice, e.g. lime juice and orange juice. After the fruit juice is santanam, then vipūti and finally with Paneer (scented water).

During the ceremony, the priest keeps chanting mantras and ringing at stated intervals a bell which he holds in his left hand and he also shows the Karpura Tīpam after each item of the apiṣēkam. On ordinary days, the apiṣēkam will be done with curtains closed, but on special days, the curtains will be drawn.

The complement for apiṣēkam can be extended or reduced to water alone, but the sequential order is inflexible. On special days, the items used for apiṣēkam can be 12, 16 and 22.

4.6 Significance Of The Items

In the apiṣēkam, different things are used and each of these objects is said to grant a different boon to the devotees, especially those who offer the objects. For example:-

- (1) Oil gives happiness.
- (2) Flour removes debts.
- (3) The dried flesh of the nelli fruit removes disease.
- (4) Tumeric powder gives the ability to attract or fascinate.
- (5) Water grants auspiciousness.
- (6) Pancakāvyam (the mixture of cow's milk, curd, ghee, urine and dung which is a purifying substance) brings purity.
- (7) Pancāmirtham (the mixture of five sweet substances, usually fruits, honey and brown sugar) grants success.
- (8) Ghee gives salvation or moksa.
- (9) Curd grants good children.

- (10) Milk brings longevity.
- (11) Honey also grants happiness.
- (12) The juice of the sugar cane removes death.
- (13) Brown sugar overcomes foes.
- (14) Bananas increase the crops.
- (15) Mangoes grants progeny.
- (16) Oranges make one honest.
- (17) Lime removes the fear of death.
- (18) The water of young coconuts gives objects of enjoyment.
- (19) Sandal grants prosperity.

4.7 Decorating (Alaṅkāram)

In the decoration ritual, the images are dressed again. For Māriyamman, the colours differ for the day. In the morning, she is dressed in light yellow silk saree. In the mid morning, the saree colour is red, evening is yellow, late evening is dark-green and her usual colour which can be used all the time is yellow.

4.8 Pūjā

After the apiṣēkam, the pūjā takes place. The temple bells will be sounded by the temple workers. The musicians and paṇṭāram will get ready for the pūjā.



PHOTO 9: VĀHANAM - LION



PHOTO 10: NAVAKIRAKANKAL



PHOTO 11: VĀHANAM: LORD MURUKAN'S PEACOCK

The paṇṭāram gets ready with three items, that is:-

- (i) Sāmbraṇi
- (ii) Ottamuga Tīpakal
- (iii) Ottamuga Kaṇṇa Taddu

The priest gets ready with the following:-

- (i) Bell
- (ii) Sembu
- (iii) Naivēttiyaṁ (food offerings to God)

Vināyaka must be worshipped at the start of any ritual. He is the "Lord of Obstacles" who can remove them to ensure success or if not properly worshipped, impose them to cause failure. The priest too prays to Vināyaka/Ganapati and recites the Ganapati mantram. Then he takes the sāmbraṇi from the paṇṭāram and shows to the goddess. When this is done, the paṇṭāram draws the curtains. After the sāmbraṇi the priest shows the Ottamuga Tīpakal and then Ottamuga Kaṇṇa Taddu. The priest then recites the mantrams, usually very briefly for daily pūjā. After the mantrams are recited, he takes the seven mugam (faces) kaṇṇa taddu (tray) and shows it to the goddess. After that he shows the Ottamuga Kaṇṇa Taddu.



PHOTO 12: LORD SIVA (Centre) AND TWO SONS, VINĀYAKAR (Left) AND MURUKAN (Right)



PHOTO 13: LORD SIVA & CONSORT - PĀRVATHY



PHOTO 14: SRĪ VINĀYAKAR/GANĒSAR



PHOTO 15: LORD MURUKAN & TWO WIFES - SRĪ VALLI AND SRĪ
THEIVANAI

This procedure is followed for all god/goddess. Finally he comes to the Pali-reetam. In Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, the vāhanam is singam (Lion) for Amman. He shows the Ottamuga Karpura Taddu and then goes to the Pali-reetam. Here he leaves some food on top of the Pali-reetam and then bathes it and keeps the food again, and shows the Ottamuga Karpura Taddu. The act of offering (food) is marked by sprinkling water around the tray. This shows the end of the pūjā. Then the priest comes back to the main goddess (Mahā Māriyamman) and shows the Tīpam again. After completing the rituals, the officiating priest will distribute to the devotees the sacred ash. The paṇṭāram will show the Karpura Tīpam. His assistants will then distribute milk or blessed water, manjal and kumkumam and Pracātam (sweet rice).

4.9 Private Worship

Private worship (arccanai) is performed for various reason, but most commonly as part of thanksgiving by a devotee for the divine assistance, in getting well, doing well in examinations, overcome financial trouble etc. In order to perform an arccanai, the



PHOTO 16: SRĪ PĒCCĀIYAMMAN



PHOTO 17: SRĪ NADARAJAR AND SRĪ SIVAGĀMI

devotee has to buy a receipt from the temple management, which he gives it to the priest at the end of the pūjā, if it is during the pūjā hours. This receipts are sold for \$0.50 and \$1/-. The fruit arccaṇai is \$0.50 whereas the coconut arccaṇai is \$1/-. The priest then asks the devotee's name, birth star(nachatiram) and performs a ritual. This ritual takes about 5 minutes only. Then he allows the devotee to pass his hands through the flame, gives him/her the holy ash, the half coconut, two bananas and some flowers. The devotee usually takes the foodstuff away to consume them for they are as the remains of the gods food, now blessed with divine grace.

In this private worship, the priest acts as an intermediary and the efficiency of the ritual is to depend almost entirely upon the worshippers devotion.

The most elementary type of worship involves the lighting of a piece of camphor before a shrine. This can be done by anyone without a priest's aid and without buying a receipt and hundreds of people do it regularly. Some people go to the shrines, pray before the gods, press their palms together in the Hindu gesture of greeting (namaskāra) or prostrate themselves before the images. (Only some people have private worships performed for them by the priest).

These are a few types of arccaṇai performed at the Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam Temple.

Sahastiranāma Arccaṇai - is an arccaṇai where the person tells the priest to do it for him/her on special occasions like birthdays and wedding anniversaries. The priest recites 1008 mantrams and blesses the person. This arccaṇai will be done anytime requested by the devotee.

Nithiapala Arccaṇai - is the daily arccaṇai, where the devotees have to buy the receipts from the temple management, for either \$0.50 or \$1/-. Here the priest recites 108 mantrams and blesses the devotee.

4.10 Sacred Ash

Sacred ash known as vipūti or tiru-nīru are produced by the burning of cowdung in the sacred fire. Cowdung is symbolical of the mala power (pasu malam) in man. 'Pasu' is a name for the soul as well as for the female cow and 'malam' is a name for our ignorance and cowdung. When the 'malam' that envelopes the soul is burnt by the fire of Jñanam or pure wisdom the Grace of god is symbolized by the sacred ashes-white in colour³. It is a basic ritual material and strongly associated with

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shaivism. Shavite priest, both Brahmin and non Brahmin apply it on their fore-heads and bodies and it is invariably distributed to worshippers, at the conclusion of ceremonies in shaivite temples.

The ash is 'Siva or 'Siva's body. Others say, the ash symbolizes the fundamental truth that the present creation will in the end be reduced to ash by 'Siva's fire⁴.

4.11 The Chief Priest

There are three priests in Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam. They are referred to as the Kurukkal. Among the three, one is the Chief Priest, whose name is Kolathu Ramaiyar. Usually, he conducts the ceremonies, but on special days, where there is more elaborate rituals to be performed, his assistants help him.

Mr. Ramaiyar is 53 years old and he has been a priest in Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam since 1963. He learned about priesthood informally from his father, Mr. Narayanan Joshier. He also learned astrology from his father, who it seems was a good astrologer. Mr. Ramaiyar is also an astrologer

whenever he is free. He is visited by the people who either plans to get married or to tell them about their future. From astrology, he gets some income too. But his main income is from being a priest. He is paid monthly on commission basis, from the arccanai receipts. The total receipts they sell in Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam is almost 10,000 per month. So, his income is roughly \$2,000/- per month.

He also earns through conducting wedding ceremonies, inside and outside the temple. If he performs a wedding in the temple, he gets \$85/- and if outside the temple, he gets at least \$150/-.

During the special upayams performed by the upayakārars, he gets \$150/- for his services.

4.12 The Paṇṭāram And His Role

The Chief Paṇṭāram in Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam is Mr. P. Kanapathy. He comes from a family where his father and uncle too are Paṇṭāram, but they do not belong to the Paṇṭāram caste group.

He was chosen as the Chief Paṇṭāram on 20th November 1986.

His duties in the temple is mainly in helping the priest during the rituals. In the apiṣēkam ceremony, he helps to prepare the materials and clothes for bathing and decorating the images, fill and light the lamps before the priest wave them and carry out a range of tasks that involve touching the images or handling the items used in worship. At the conclusion of a pūjā, his duty is to show the tīpam to the public. Whenever they are free, they are seen making garlands for the pūjās.

The chief paṇṭāram employs two boys to help him in the daily chores. He pays \$200/- and \$70/- to each one. He also provides them with dohhy and haircut facilities.

He also at times have to go to other temples like the Gaṇēsar Temple in Court Hill and Srī Subramaniyar Temple in Batu Caves if they don't have paṇṭāram there.

The paṇṭāram too is paid on commission basis, that is through the arccaṇai receipts. He gets 6 cents per receipt. They have the 108 saḡāsamam arccaṇai in Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam at least 15 - 20 times a month. For each arccaṇai he is paid 50 cents. On special upayams, he gets around \$100/- to \$150/-. He said for Chitrā Paruvam Upayam, he received \$120/-. If he helps a wedding ceremony, he gets \$6/-.

4.13 Otuvar

There is only one otuvar in Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam . He is on visa from India. His role is to sing from the Tamil devotional hymns known as the Tirumurai. For most of the time, songs from a part of the Tirumurai known as the Tēvāram are sung at the main periods of daily worship. The otuvar in Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam also sings in the Gaṇēsar Temple in Court Hill.

He conducts Tēvāram classes on Sundays at the Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam for children and adults who are interested, free of charge.

4.14 Other Temple Officials

If the priests are the principal servants of the god and goddess, in Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, they nonetheless do not work alone. There is a division of ritual labour amongst the various officials. Those with key roles in the ritual are the temple servants, chanters, devotional singer and musicians.

The temple servants, the pantaram and his assistants belong to the non-priestly castes. In Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, there are three priests, one paṇṭāram and his two assistants, devotional singer - otuvar, musicians - mēlatālam and nātasvaram and cleaners who sweep and washes the temple, cooks who prepares food during special upayams and festivals.

4.15 The Special Twenty-Two Upayams

In Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, there are twenty-two special upayams which are conducted by the public. Each upayam is conducted by a group of Tamil Hindus of many organisation, which is from the private and government sectors.

Sometimes, the upayams are carried out by a family, and also by one caste group and mostly by Hindus who work in one government or private offices. In each case, the upayakārars take full responsibility in carrying out the upayams successfully. If there is any balance in the funds, it will be given to the temple management.

The upayams are spread out throughout the year. The names of the upayam and the group conducting is given below:-

<u>Name of Upayam</u>	<u>Name of Group</u>
1. Chitrā Paruvam -----	Thotshanatārkal (Tamil from South India)
2. Vaikāsivisākam -----	LLN South Indians
3. Aani Thirumancanam -----	JKR
4. Sri Vināyakar Caturtti---	Telecoms
5. Navarāthiri- 2nd Day ----	Railway Engine & Garage
6. Navarāthiri- 3rd Day ----	Paalkārarkal (Milkmen)
7. Navarāthiri- 4th Day ----	Aasarikal (Goldsmiths)
8. Navarāthiri- 5th Day ----	Railway Engineering Section
9. Navarāthiri- 6th Day ----	Ennai Viabārikal (Oil Merchants)

10. Navarāthiri- 7th Day ---- Viabārikal (General Merchants)
11. Navarāthiri- 8th Day ---- Chettiars (Nagarathārkal)
12. Navarāthiri- 9th Day ---- Writers
13. Navarāthiri-10th Day ---- Kādikararkal (Bullockcart owners)
14. Navarāthiri-11th Day ---- Engineering Workshop
(JKR, Railway and Bandaraya)
15. Navarāthiri-12th Day ---- Sunambokālavainar (Lime Kline Workers)
16. Navarāthiri-13th Day ---- Temple Staff
17. Kanda Caṣṭi ----- Dhoby (Salavai Tholilālarkal)
18. Tirukārtikkai ----- Suruthu Tholilālarkal
(Cigar Workers)
19. Tiruvātirai ----- Hindu Workers of Selangor
Chinese Recreation Club
20. Mācimakam ----- Residents of Batu Road & Sentul
21. Sri Rāma Navami ----- Worshippers of Sri Rāma
22. Pankuni Uttaram ----- Waterworks Department

Footnotes:

- 1 : Right Reverend Henry Whitehead,
P.D, The Village Gods Of South India
- 2 : Ibid 10

Footnotes:

- 3 : Mudaliyar, Sabaratna - Essentials of
Hinduism, in the
light of Shaiva
Siddhanta
- 4 : Babb, Lawrence - Hindu Mediumship in Singapore

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Chapter Five

5. CURRENT DEVELOPMENT IN SRĪ MAHĀ MĀRIAYAMMAN KŌVIL DEVASTĀNAM

Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam has been growing with times to meet the demands and changes of the society since it was built. The striking developments have been in the aspects of size, structure, management, social, economic and political contributions.

In the past, the temple's major role has been only in religion, though to a certain extent, it played a small role in politics as well. In the process of expansion, the temple gained the status as a Model Hindu Temple in Malaysia. To carry on with the good image, its management is constantly working towards its ultimate aim of contributing effectively to the Hindu society, in every way possible.

5.1 Size and Structure

The temple only recently acquired its new elaborate form and structure, after a major renovation. This renovation gave a new look to the temple. The grand

colourful gopuram with its beautiful carvings of symbols of Hinduism at the entrance, is one of the important changes. The former gōpura was rather insignificant looking. It did not create an impact on the temple's image, unlike the new one.

Since the temple is located in the heart of the city along one of its busy streets, it has attracted the attention of tourists who frequent the place to observe the Hindu pūjās and ceremonies conducted daily.

Another area of improvement is the construction of office space, conference room, library, priest's room, bride and groom's room, registration office, kitchen and a few other rooms for the musicians.

The conference room which can accommodate approximately 100 people is used for holding Board Meetings and also other meetings. The offices too are well equipped with modern furniture and fittings such as file cabinets, a photostat machine, typewriters, telephone and so on. There is also a sitting area to entertain visitors. All these rooms are fitted with an air conditioner. The library too

which has these facilities is big and spacious. It is built with sound proof material to ensure quietness inside. The library too is a new feature and a young lady has been employed to take charge of it. The usage of the library has been restricted to only during the office hours when it is open. The public is not allowed to borrow books as there has been frequent cases of books not being returned. There is also a need to equip the library with more books relating to religion and other related matters.

The wedding registration office is also a new feature. Previously, wedding registrations were conducted in an ordinary office but now a young lady is also employed to register the couples in this new office.

The kitchen is well equipped with large gas stoves for cooking for masses. A male cook has been employed to do the cooking during special functions and pūjās. Lunch prepared by the temple cook is served on festive days. The public could sit on the spacious floor which is also the results of the extension of the temple.

The other rooms are for the priest who resides there during most part of the day. He is usually visited by the public who come to consult him on religious matters. The bride and groom's rooms serve as a place for refreshing and changing during the wedding day.

As a whole, the renovation and extension project has given Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam a new face lift. This is not only in terms of additional buildings, but also in terms of finishings such as the flooring, walls, paintings and installation of new huge statues which was brought in from India to fit inside and outside the temple. Large marble slabs were used for the flooring and attractive tiles for the walls. In addition to this, huge glittering chandeliers are also fitted on the ceilings. The new statues have enriched the environment of the temple making it a very artistic place. Due to this major renovation and extension, a Mahā Kumpāpiṣēkam was held for the 4th time on 24/11/1985 on a large scale.

The next phase of development is the proposed Māriayamman Complex just behind the temple. It is

intended to be a big project which will include car parks, and a wedding hall. This project has not got off the ground due to some administration problem. According to the officials at Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam , they are awaiting for the City Hall to give the approval to proceed. The car park is intended to ease the parking problems faced by the temple devotees.

5.2 Management

Very recently in November 1987, the temple management held its biannual election to elect its new Board of Management. Arising from this election, a new Chairman, secretary and a treasurer were elected. As Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam deals actively in matters relating to properties and cash, it therefore is necessary for the temple to have permanent staff to see to the daily activities effectively. These staff are employed to handle the daily management of the temple such as accounts, public relations, registration of weddings and the library.



PHOTO 18: LIBRARY, REGISTRATION ROOM AND KITCHEN



PHOTO 19: CONFERENCE ROOM AND OFFICE



PHOTO 20: STATUES - ABOVE THE TEMPLE



PHOTO 21: LORD OF SUN

There are also a few staff to maintain the cleanliness of the temple. They are also permanent employees of the temple.

The new line-up after the election are as follows:-

- i) The Chairman: Mr. A. Sithambaram, AMN
(General Merchant)
- ii) The Hon. Secretary: Mr. M. Saravanakumar, AMN
- iii) The present 7 trustees are:
 - 1) Mr. Kodivel - General Merchant Upayam
 - 2) Mr. P. Kumaran - Telecoms Upayam
 - 3) Mr. A.T. Rajah - Residents of Batu
Road and Sentul Upayam
 - 4) Mr. C. Ambigapathy - LLN Upayam
 - 5) Mr. S. Panchacharam - Worshippers of
Sri Rāma Upayam
 - 6) Mr. M. Saravanakumar - Writers Upayam
 - 7) Mr. D. Sellapan - J.K.R. Upayam

5.3 Education

In the field of education, the temple is playing an important role. It is running the management of two primary Tamil schools. The schools are Appar Tamil School and Batu Caves Tamil School. Appar Tamil

School has 90 students. It has only one session that is in the morning. Whereas, Batu Caves Tamil School has 1,000 students. It is expected to get more students in 1988. The school was graded as a 'A' category school in the beginning of 1986. In October 1987, Dato S. Samyvellu announced in the press that MIC is trying to help Tamil schools in the country by providing financial aid to renovate buildings. The Ministry of Finance has set aside an allocation for this purpose and it will start by Mid-year in 1988. Batu Caves Tamil School is one of the schools which will be getting the financial aid.

Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam too is providing free exercise books to all students of Batu Caves Tamil School and Appar Tamil School. In 1986, 15,000 exercise books were presented to the students. Since the number of students seems to be increasing at the Batu Caves Tamil School, there is a proposal to build a 3 storey building. Due to the initiative of the Batu Caves MIC Chairman, Mr. S. Rajagopal, P.J.K., the school too has got 3 computers.

Since the Appar Tamil School has got only morning

session, Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam is trying to conduct kindergarten, Industrial and Computer Courses in the school in the afternoons and evenings. They intend to do it as a joint-venture with a private body or just privatise it. By doing this the temple management hopes to increase their income to supplement the expenses in managing this school.

Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam too supports the projects organised by University Malaya's Tamil Language Society and Hindu Society. In 1986, Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam sponsored the breakfast, lunch, and tea during the religious quiz organised by the Hindu society of University Malaya. They donated \$1,140/- for this purpose. The temple too donated \$110/- to the Tamil Language Society for the releasing of a book.

They also have extended scholarships and loans to students to further their education. Recently this has been stopped because students have failed to re-pay the money after completing their courses and acquiring a job. This attitude by students has dampened the temple's enthusiasm to help them.

5.4 Religion

Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam realises the need to create an awareness among the public especially the Hindus about the Hindu religion. In this attempt, the temple in recent years has been increasing its religious activities for the society. One of its attempts is by conducting Tēvāram classes and holding cultural competitions. The tevaram classes are conducted free of charge. The classes are held every Sundays. The Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam too organised the 'Thirumurai' Conference on the 14th, 15th & 16th of August 1987.

The two schools under the management of Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam have tēvāram sessions in the morning before they start their lessons. They also have a teacher to teach them about the Hindu religion weekly.

Recently, for the first time in Malaysia, Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam had the mantrams recited in Tamil and not in Sanskrit. This enabled the devotees to understand what is said during the ritual. During special poojas, when there is a large

crowd, the priest uses the mike to recite the mantrams and in between the pooja, the otuvar will sing devotional songs. This is done in the Sri Gaṇēsar Temple too.

5.5 Caste Influence

Possibly, one of the social problems that remain unsolved until today is the persistence of caste among the Indian Society. Caste is a named group of persons characterised by endogamy, hereditary worship and pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation.

To clearly point out the practice of caste differentiation in temples, is quite difficult task because of it and is a sensitive issue.

In Malaysian context, there are some changes occurring but nevertheless, caste consciousness is still prevalent in their daily lives.

In Sri Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam, each upayam actually comprises members of a caste group. Although it is not so obvious nowadays, there are

upayams which are restricted to members of one particular caste group only. But upayams of LLN staff, JKR staff and others does not consist of members of the same caste, because here, there is mixture of caste group in LLN staff or JKR staff. But Chettiars/Nagaratarkal who conducts the Navarāthiri 8th day consist of all Chettiar members. They too, don't have representatives in the Board of Management because Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam is controlled by South Indians of Tamil origin.

Eventually, management will be passed on to important members of that particular caste. This is because the Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam is a big and well established temple was once founded and built by their respective caste groups and they want to safeguard the importance of their caste by handing down the management to their own caste members.

Caste influence too are being used in getting votes whenever elections for the temple management committees are held. Election candidate often use the caste element to swing the members vote to their favour.

The origin of upayams organised and financed by caste organisation could be because this is the only occasion where members of a caste can get to know their fellow caste members.

5.6 Other Developments

Temple affairs should not be mixed with politics. For a temple to function properly, according to its role, there should be minimum or no interference from politics. A closer look at Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, will clearly reveal the influence by politics in the temple. Notable politicians in the cabinet had once held posts in the management of Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam. This temple has been the best place to start off a career in politics. Experience as a committee member in such a temple will keep him in good stead in getting supporters. Some of the members of the Board are holding important post in MIC at branch and state level.

The temple is centre of activity and its management committee are well known to the public in terms of leadership and responsibilities with some assets in

their favour, these people could easily get support from the committee.

Recently, in the MIC general election, one of the officials in Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam was involved in the election. This person as observed by the writer was actually interested to get into politics and used Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam as a place to start off. This person stood for the post for Central Working Committee (Exco) in MIC. Unfortunately, he lost and at present, he is not in the Board of Management.

Dato S. Samyvellu, was also an upayakārar in the Kādikārarkal Upayam (Bullock Cart Owners) before he became active in politics. Most probably, he too gathered his supporters while he was involved in Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam. During the MIED Lottery tickets sale, Dato S. Samyvellu managed to push \$60,000/- of tickets to Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam, because he had difficulties getting the tickets sold and also because he knows that the temple can afford to buy it if they could not sell it off. Finally, Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam actually bought more than \$20,000/-

worth of tickets. This indicate the amount of political involvement in the temple.

Another incident which indicates the MIC's involvement in the temple's affairs, was during the Mahā Kumpāpiṣēkam, which was held in November 1985. To inaugurate this ceremony, MIC leaders like Dato Pathmanaban and Datin Indrani were invited.

Involvement in politics and temple can confuse individual, with their roles. Their position in the temple and politics can influence the decision they make and could cause problems for the temple.

In conjunction with the Sixth International Conference of Tamil Studies held on the 15th November 1987, in Kuala Lumpur, a Tamil Cultural Exhibition was held in Muzeum Negara, Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam Temple with the request of Datuk Subramaniam, loaned its ancient wooden chariot for display at the exhibition. This chariot is 19 feet high and was elaborately decorated and fitted with lights.

Chapter Six

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Achievements by Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam

Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam is indeed a very popular and wealthy temple in Malaysia. Although its location is not ideal, like the location of old temples in India, its role is ideal of a model Hindu temple. It existed in the 19th century as a hut, and now has developed and expanded into one of the most prestigious temple in Malaysia. It started as a family temple and grew into a temple for the Hindu community in Malaysia. Its history is very unique, as it went through a lot of struggle and finally even to the court. But now it stands majestically amidst a busy city of Kuala Lumpur and still growing to serve the Hindu community.

Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam managed to gain its present status due to the efforts of its founders. During the British occupation, the temple gained respect from the British officers because the

founders, Mr. Kaayeroganam Pillai and Mr. Thamboosamy Pillai were from a very wealthy family. They held prestigious positions and contributed a lot to the society in general. They supported and co-operated well with the British.

For the past 56 years, Srī Mahā Māriayamman Kōvil Devastānam has played an important role in serving the religion and the community. Its efforts and role, definitely needs to be given appreciation and salutation. This was due to proper management of the temple since its early days. When the Supreme Court issued an order on how to run the temple, the temple officials had to follow all the bye-laws. This ensured that no individual had the right to do things as he liked. The Court Order was probably very helpful at that time because there were still remains of the misunderstandings between the two parties. The Court Order enabled the temple to be in peace and function really well.

The upayam system which was in existence since the Court Order was issued, was one system which helped the temple to invest its income in buildings and land. Today the temple is so independent because it

survives on the income from the investments and donations by the public. It doesn't have to rely on government assistance to function. In fact its strong financial position has helped in gaining respect and admiration from the government and the people. The upayam system too has helped in conducting the important upayams with proper planning. Since each upayam is sponsored by one group, it eases the burden for the temple management. The upayakārars are responsible for carrying out each upayam successfully.

The upayam system too has enabled the public to get involved in the temple affairs and be part of the temple. They feel the sense of dedication and work towards achieving the temple's dream and aspirations.

Its location in the middle of a busy city has attracted tourists who enter the temple to admire it's interior and at the same time get to know what Hinduism is about in general by looking at the statues and its activities inside the temple.

In religious aspects, the temple has been taking very serious steps to preserve the rituals of the religion by practising it and also spreading it through books

and articles. For every festivals, they celebrate it grandly and this attracts devotees to the temple on these particular days. This enables them to know the significance of the festival and the importance to celebrate it. By doing this the public becomes more aware of the Hindu calendar and religion. The temple publishes a yearly Hindu calendar stating all the important festival days throughout the year.

Although it is functioning as a temple, its involvement in education is really something to be admired. Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam conducts the two Tamil Schools successfully, providing all the necessary items to them. The children are taught the Hindu religion as well as the Tēvārams daily. The Appar Tamil School and Batu Caves Tamil school children benefit out of this facility. They will definitely grow up to be more religiously aware than the others.

Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam has also diversified its activities to include investments into properties to ensure that it gets a steady flow of funds in order to partially sponsor its charity projects and other activities.

Although many of Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam's activities needs to be commended, there are also happenings in the temple which needs to be critically analysed.

6.2 Problems Faced By The Temple

The tamil newspapers very often highlight the poor management of the temple and fights which are common during their Board of Management's meetings. This events which are publicised, comes to the peoples knowledge and their respect and trust towards the temple seems to have diminished. The writer who talked to a few people about the temple found out that their views were more towards the mismanagement of funds and the needs for the temple to improve its socio-religious role.

Malpractice involving money too is common occurrence in the temple. For example in 1975, the Fifth International Conference of Tamil studies was held in Madurai, India. In conjunction with this conference ten Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam officials went to Madurai to attend this function. All the expenditure for this trip was sponsored by

the temple. The total amount spent was \$60,000/-. This aroused many questions from the public who thought that it was very unnecessary to spend such big amount for this conference.

This malpractices occur because individual who gets involve in the temple has got some personal reason to do so. Usually, as the writer observed, most members of the Board of Management are not very educated, and come from the working class category. The educated group never get involved in temple affairs.

This creates an opportunity for others who have a mind to swindle money for their own personal interest. It therefore would bring about bad reputation for the temple.

6.3 Suggestions To Overcome Problems

Being a Hindu temple, the writer would like to stress here that Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam should concentrate their efforts in the areas of the Hindu religion. In Malaysia, although 80% of the Indians are Hindus, their knowledge in Hinduism is very shallow. This could be partly attributed to the

fact that the Hindu religion is very complex, Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam should take bold and serious steps to create ways and means for every Hindu to understand and learn the religion. Being the mother of Hindu temples and also being financially strong, it has to take the lead to clear the cloud of darkness where religion is concerned.

Their efforts should cover the whole country and not just in Kuala Lumpur only. Some of the ways to create an awareness and understanding of the religion among the Hindus are as follows:-

6.3.1 Being a model Hindu temple, Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam can publish books on Hinduism which are simplified for the general understanding to the Hindus. These books could be published in English. This is because the main problem regarding the books on Hinduism are that they are in Tamil and of a high level. Many non-Tamil reading people have difficulties in obtaining books which can give clear and brief explanation of the religion. Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam can do

this by getting the involvement of educationists who are knowledgeable in religious matters, to write the books and then financing the publication of these books. In publishing books, it should cater both the younger and the older generation. The difference should be in the language media and not the facts. Since Bahasa Malaysia is the national language, it would be a good idea to publish the books in this medium too.

- 6.3.2 The Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam should also take an interest in promoting and preserving the Indian culture. The Indian culture which is part of the Hindu religion is rich and varied and unless constantly practised would otherwise diminish in importance and finally disappear altogether. Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam Temple should therefore conduct regular traditional dance classes, instrument classes, music classes and so on. The fees charged should be of a nominal rate to ensure the participation of all, including the

poor. Currently, the classes held in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya are not within the reach of the lower class as the fees are quite high. These classes should also be made available in all other state.

- 6.3.3 Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam should place emphasis in promoting religion. The temple should ensure that Hindu religion is not misunderstood or misinterpreted by the people and should take on initiative to teach this religion to the people. This could be done by conducting a survey on the Hindu community. The survey should reveal the economic status of the people and the temple can adopt some of the below average families and provide them with food, clothings and other basic necessities.

Besides that the temple officials could visit them regularly and have dialogue sessions on the Hindu religion. They could also counsel them on how to increase their income and plan out their future. In this way the temple would to a certain extent be able to prevent conversion of Hindus to other religion.

Promoting of Hindu religion could also be done by way of recording and selling cassettes on religious matters such as the procedure on conducting prayers at home and other observances of the religion. They could also publish magazines or pamphlets on every major festivals celebrated by the Hindus and stating the importance of each festival. This is because many festivals are celebrated without actually knowing the significance and the history behind it.

Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam too should take serious steps to abolish unnecessary rituals like the carrying of kavaṭi with very long skewers in the shape of spears (vēl). The ritual of animal sacrifice too should be banned. All these have aroused confusion among the Hindus.

In the previous chapter, the writer has said that the temple is very often frequented by tourists. Regarding this, Srī Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam should have a guide book to all the three temples of the Charity. They should assign a few staff

to guide them around to these temples. Infact the temple could generate revenue by selling souvenirs in the form of pictures of the temple, key holders and other related items with Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam's logo on it to these tourists. One staff should be stationed within the temple to entertain and guide the tourists around the temple. This tourists could be enlightened on the relevant aspects of the temple and the religion. As such the tourists would probably appreciate and understand the religion better.

The focus of attention should also be upon the Hindu youths. As future adults taking over the management and future of the temple, these youths should be groomed well on all aspects of the Hindu religion and also trained to be good leaders of the country.

6.4 Conclusion

Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam as a model hindu temple in Malaysia, should play an active

role in promoting the Hindu religion, not only in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya, but nation wide. It can be a guide to other temples on how to conduct rituals and other ceremonies.

It also should play the central role in the society in helping the Hindu community in the areas of education, welfare and religion.

Another important point to note is, Sri Mahā Māriyamman Kōvil Devastānam should in future, include the intellectuals in the management of the temple in order to run the temple in a more effective way. Intellectuals will be able to contribute good applicable ideas which will lead to more effective growth of Hinduism in Malaysia.

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