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HINDUISM: SOME ASPECTS OF
HINDU TEMPLES IN KUALA LUMPUR

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LATIHAN ILMIAH
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SINOPSIS

Dalam konteks Malaysia, sebuah kuil Hindu wujud sebagai sebuah tempat yang menarik. Suatu kajian ke atas kuil-kuil Hindu akan menolong menjelaskan kebudayaan serta kepercayaan keagamaan orang-orang India di Malaysia. Kajian ini mengandungi lima bab..

Bab Satu mengandungi penerangan tentang pengenalan, tujuan dan skop kajian ini. Berbagai metodologi yang digunakan dan masalah-masalah yang dihadapi semasa kajian ini juga disentuh di dalam bab ini.

Bab Kedua berkaitan dengan permulaan perkembangan kuil-kuil Hindu di Kuala Lumpur. Definasi yang ringkas tentang agama Hindu diberikan dan penekanan adalah pada pembahagian kuil-kuil ini berdasarkan beberapa kriteria yang tertentu.

Di dalam Bab Ketiga, upacara-upacara dan perayaan-perayaan di dalam kuil-kuil ini dijelaskan. Suatu penerangan yang menyeluruh diberikan tentang perkara-perkara yang berkaitan dengan berbagai-bagai perayaan yang dirayakan oleh kuil-kuil. Peranan padri-padri serta Dewa-Dewa yang utama diberi perhatian.

Bab Keempat adalah mengenai aspek-aspek sosial dan politik kuil-kuil Hindu ini. Ini adalah penting kerana kuil-kuil mempunyai tanggungjawab yang besar terhadap masyarakat, terutama sekali dalam pengekaln warisan budaya. Peranan beberapa organisasi yang berkaitan dengan kuil-kuil juga diberi tumpuan.

Di dalam Bab Kelima, penekanan utama diberikan kepada masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh kuil-kuil. Beberapa cadangan juga diberikan untuk mengatasinya. Ini adalah untuk menentukan bahawa kuil-kuil Hindu ini terus kekal di tengah-tengah pembangunan yang pesat di Malaysia.

SYNOPSIS

A Hindu temple remains a place of interest in the Malaysian context. A study on Hindu Temples will help to explain the religious belief and culture of the Indians in Malaysia. This research consists of five chapters.

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

Chapter II deals with the historical development of Hindu Temples in Kuala Lumpur. A brief definition of Hinduism is given and emphasis is on the categorization of the temples based on specific criterias.

In Chapter III, rituals and festivals of the temples are given due importance. A thorough explanation is given on matters pertaining to the various festivals celebrated by the temples. The role of temple priests and the main deities are also highlighted.

Chapter IV is about the social and political aspects of the Hindu temples. It is important because temples have a lot of responsibilities towards the society especially in sustaining the cultural heritage. The role of various organisation is also focussed in relation to the temples.

In Chapter V, the main emphasis is on the problems that are being faced by the temples. Some suggestive remarks had been

given on how to overcome them. This is to ensure that the Hindu Temples still exist in the midst of rapid development in Malaysia.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION1.1 Aims of Research

It has been observed that there are rarely any books written about Hindu religion or Hinduism in Malaysia. Except for some dissertations by local academicians, studies in this field is quite new. There are still many aspects of Hinduism in Malaysia that need to be studied, which can also be used by the non-Hindus to know more about the Hindu heritage.

The following academic exercise is presented in an attempt to fill up, in part at least, the vacuum of information regarding the Hindu religion in Malaysia. This is because an exhaustive analysis of this topic cannot be done in this research.

The vacuum might have been created due to the existing close interaction between the Indians in Malaysia with their ancestors in India, from where they migrated during the British colonialism. Thus a situation arises where we can clearly find many books written and research done on Hindu religion which were published in India by Indian writers.

These books from India were used by local writers to explain the practice of Hindu religion in Malaysia without taking into consideration other factors like the social, political and economical environment that prevails in Malaysia. Therefore

more studies was done locally on topics like Indian immigration, political association and kinship rather than on Hindu religion. Studies on Hindu religion locally were ignored because one can always refer to the books from India to know about Hinduism.

In social science research, religion is practically a very important aspect because the ways of life, thoughts and behaviour of man is greatly influenced or reflected by the religion that he believes in. Religion is the only provider of answers to various shortcomings or problems in life that needs to be looked at from a more supernatural perspective.

In this academic exercise, the author 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 to the temple.

In his capacity, the author will try to account for the historical development of Hindu temples that exist in Kuala Lumpur and give reasons to why there are so many temples that are big as well as small. A special emphasis will be given on the type of management of the temples in relation to its development.

A point of interest that will be touched is the various rituals and festivals that takes place in the temples, for it can be seen that different temples with different deities give

more allocation to festivals which are related to the particular deities.

Lastly a look at the social and political aspects of the Hindu temples will help to throw some light on the functions of temples to the society as a whole. This is quite important because the growing pressure from the Government had made the Hindu temples more "politicized" in the sense that politicians are also playing their roles in helping to safeguard the interest of the temples.

Lastly this academic exercise is hoped to give a better picture of the existence and problems that are being faced by the Hindu temples in maintaining the temples and create an awareness so that all these shortcomings could be solved in the near future.

1.2 Methods Used

This academic exercise is based on fieldwork that was carried from March until August 1984. The main methods used to conduct the study were participant observation and key-informant interviews. Questionnaires were not utilized for this purpose. Instead, informal interviews were carried out.

This study was done in various locations around Kuala Lumpur and attention was focussed on forty temples out of a possible hundred temples varying in sizes from extremely large and well-established to medium sized and lastly to road-side

shrines which are very small. Location of these temples which are scattered around places of high Indian population, were made possible from a recent census done by the Malaysia Hindu Sangam.

The temples of study were picked according to its sizes and place of location. It was also thought to be feasible to pick temples also according to prominent deities. Fieldwork was carried out during the mornings and evenings. Most of the temples which were visited hold special services on Tuesdays and Fridays where a lot of devotees from a specific locality gathers.

It was quite appropriate to conduct interviews with temple priests after the morning religious sessions when the priest will have ample time to voice out their viewpoints. The morning religious sessions will be conducted between 5.30 a.m. until 7.30 a.m. after which the temple is totally deserted.

Fieldwork was also carried out during the evenings in the temple when the services are more elaborate. This is when one can properly observe all the proceedings pertaining to the rituals. The author also paid regular visits to some temples to consult the temple management committee from whom a lot of information regarding historical development, financial position and other matters relating to it were obtained.

The author had the opportunity to talk to some of the prominent figures from Hindu organisations and Mandrams, who are well-versed in all matters regarding Hinduism as practiced in

this country. A lot of critical and constructive opinions were shared with them concerning the position of Hindu temples in Kuala Lumpur.

To make this study clearer, the author was able to take photographs of various temples, with their deities, during rituals and also during major ceremonies like consecration ceremony. A point to note is that most of the author's request for photo-taking sessions were willingly accepted by the temple management committees.

Informal interviews were done based on a few similar questions to get more appropriate answers. The fact that most of these interviews were carried out in English and Tamil shows that the possibility of getting more favourable answers are much better.

Interviews with "key-informants", who comprised elderly people were conducted to find out more about the historical aspects of some temples. Various souvenir programmes, almanacs and religious books were given to the author for a better understanding of the temples activities.

1.3 Problems faced during Research

One of the basic problem faced by the author during fieldwork was the difficulty in finding the exact locations of secluded temples. Even having the census from the Malaysia Hindu Sangam did not help much because important roadside shrines

were not able to be found.

Some difficulties also arose in getting proper acknowledgeable members of the temple committees to conduct informal interviews. These members were only accessible during the weekends or on Fridays and an effort had to be made to meet them.

The author also faced the problem of getting negative response from some of the respondents who were interviewed. This is because any topic concerning religion is highly sensitive and the respondents, especially the priests, are reluctant to give constructive comments on the various questions put forward by the author.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF
HINDU TEMPLES IN KUALA LUMPUR2.1 Hinduism

Hinduism is a word derived from the civilization of the Hindus which was situated on the land of the Indus River in India. Hinduism can be looked at as a family of religions rather than as one religion. There are different sects, mainly Saivism, Vaishnavism and Saktism, which have their own scriptures, traditions, beliefs and practices.¹

It is also necessary to emphasize what all Hindus have in common: mainly three great beliefs which are belief in reincarnation, law of Karma which is the master of everybody's destiny and that God is omnipresent and exists in all things.²

In relevance to this study, it is of utmost importance to explain what is Saivism because nearly 80% of the Indians in Malaysia comes under this belief. Saivism is the religion that holds Śiva as the Supreme God. The Saivites believe that the triad of Hindu religion which are Viṣṇu, Brāhma and Rudra (another

1. Renou, Louis, The Nature of Hinduism (1962) p. 112.

2. R. Antoine, Religious Hinduism, A Presentation and Appraisal (1964) p. 28.

name for Śiva) are three aspects of one God which is Śiva.³

Vaishnavism is also a popular religion which hails Lord Viṣṇu as the Supreme God. In Kuala Lumpur, Vaishnavites who consist the minority group are usually of North Indian origin, namely Gujeratis, Sindhis and Maharatis. A large temple, Śrī Lakṣmī Narayanan temple in Jalan Ipoh was built by the North Indian businessmen community and there are also other temples dedicated to Viṣṇu which are Śrī Rama and Śrī Krishna temples.

The Saivite also believes in the three worlds of existence. The First World is the physical universe of gross or material substance in which phenomenas are perceived by our five senses. It is also called Bhuloka, "Bhu" referring to "bumi" (earth) and "loka" is another word for world.

The Second World is the mental or astral world and exists "within" the First World. It is the subtle place of existence where the soul goes during sleep and when the physical body dies. It is referred to as "Devaloka" and is inhabited by souls, devas and asuras.

The Third World is the celestial or causal world because it originates and guides everything from here. It is inhabited

3. R. Antoine, Saiva Siddhantam, The Cream of South Indian Thought (1955) p. 2.

by Mahadevas or Gods and highly evolved souls. It is also called "Śivaloka".

The individual soul has to travel through these three worlds where it eventually grows and evolves more and more like Śiva until it merges with Him. It has also to overcome the three "malas" or impurities which are ānava, māyā and karma.⁴

Ānava is the personal ego, māyā is the world or the "place" where things happen and karma is the results of our deeds or whatever that happens within māyā. These triple bond can be explained in relation to schooling life. If ānava is the ignorance of the pupil, then māyā is the school and karma is the lessons taught in the school.

2.2 What is a Temple?

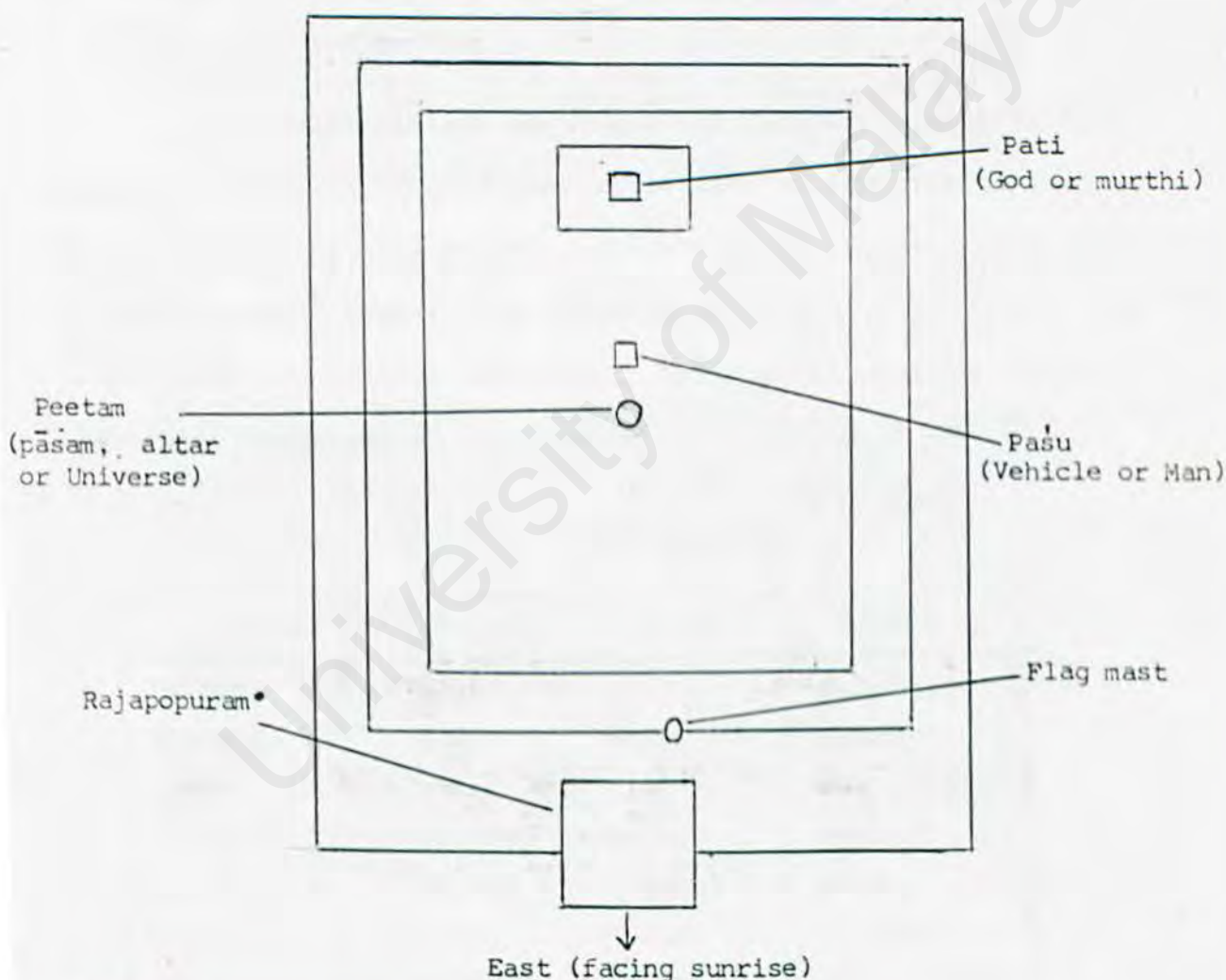
A question that is often asked is why should one go to the temple when God is omnipresent? It is in the temple that the three worlds can communicate most easily and regularly. Therefore the temple is the agreed upon meeting place of the three worlds.⁵

4. R. Antoine, *ibid.*, p. 30.

5. Renou, Louis, *ibid.*, p. 82.

It is interesting to note that the three eternal division of Saivism which are pati (God), paśu (Man) and pāśam (Universe) finds clear reflection in the basic structure of a Hindu temple. The Murthi, the vahanam and the pali-peetam,⁺ which are found in every temple, represents these three entities.

TABLE 2.1 Basic Structure of a Temple



⁺Vahanam is the vehicle for God in form of animals. Pali-peetam is a black structure that is found beside the vahanam.

*Rajagopuram is the monument-like structure in front of temples, which is quite tall like a tower.

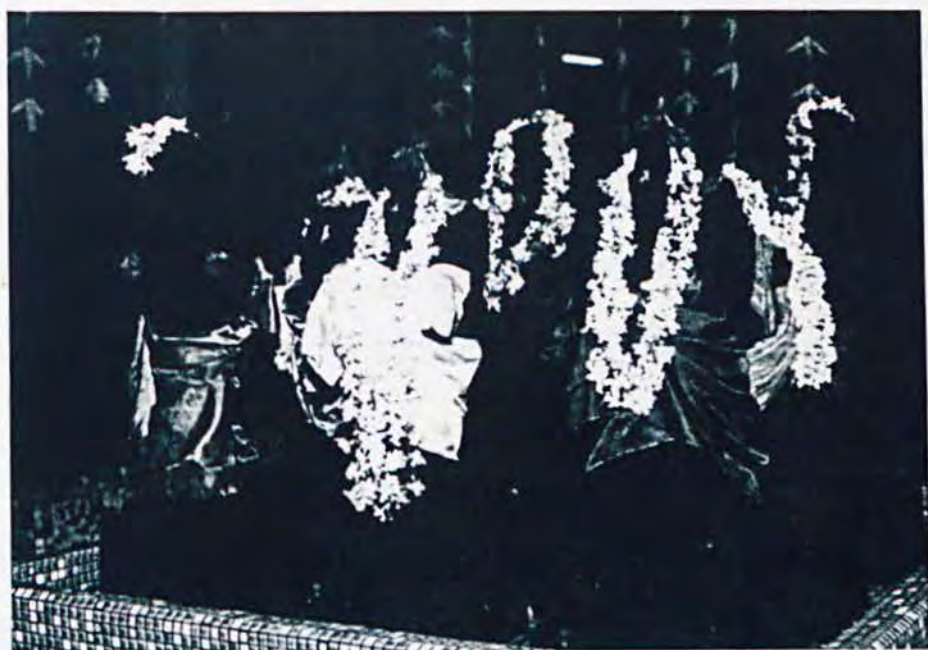
In the Malaysian context, there is much diversity in size and artistic value, ranging from wayside shrines with small statuettes to great temples with boundary walls, enclosed with rajagopuram, courtyards and statuary manifestations of each God's nature before the entrance. Some of the major temples have statues of two or more guardians of the temple. These guardians are called "thura palagar" and are found in temples like the Jalan Pasar Vināyagar temple.

A common feature among some of the big temples in Kuala Lumpur is the existence of Navakkirakaṅkal or the nine planets which changes the life pattern of the Hindus. It is a must in most of the Māriamman temples and devotees usually pray or take a vow to overcome bad luck or disasters. Each of the planets can be elaborated according to each day of the week.

Table 2.2 Navakkirakaṅkal

Planet	Day	Planet	Stone*
Surian	Sunday	Sun	Ruby
Chandran	Monday	Moon	Pearl
Sevāi	Tuesday	Mars	Red Coral
Puthan	Wednesday	Mercury	Emerald
guru	Thursday	Jupiter	Topaz
Sukran	Friday	Venus	Diamond
Sani	Saturday	Saturn	Blue Sapphire
Rahu)Deepam to)be shown in anti-clock- wise direc- tion)more as	Cat's eye
Kethe)shadow planets	Komethagam

*The stone specifies which one of the precious stones that is resembled by the nine planets. An English word for 'komethagam' was not available.



FOTOKINA JAN. 85

Photo 1: Navakkirakankal



FOTOKINA JAN. 85

Photo 2: Vahanam (right) and Pali-peatam

2.3 The Early Temples

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, Indian immigrants came to Malaya by the thousands under the indenture labour system. These labourers, who were isolated to the rubber estates had also brought with them their village religious beliefs to the plantations.

Saint Appar's* declaration that places without temples are dense forests and his common proverb advising people not to live in places where there are no temples, brings forth the importance of temples. Furthermore, the estate management had temples built for the labourers so that they would adhere to the life they experienced in India. The fact that the temples were partly sponsored by the management and that compulsory payment was deducted from the labourers' wages for temple maintenance, attributed to the practice of Hindu ceremonies as closely as possible to the conditions in India.⁶

Most of the temples built in the estates in the early stages were dedicated to the South Indian village deities, mainly Munēswarar, Māriamman and Muniandy. It can therefore be inferred that these labourers also wanted the temples to give them protection in an isolated area.

*Appar was one of the four teachers who preached the religion to the various parts of South India in the form of songs and hymns.

6. Arasaratnam, Sinnappah, Indians in Malaysia and Singapore (1970) p. 162.

Development of temples in the urban areas only took a serious step in the 1910's and 1920's, mainly through the effort by the middle class Indians who were employed in Government sectors to preserve the Indian tradition.

From the late 1870's until the beginning of the 20th century, temples in the urban areas began to be established, namely Śrī Mahāmāriamman temple in Jalan Bandar, Śrī Thandāyuthabāni temple in Jalan Ipoh and the Śrī Kandaswāmy temple in Jalan Scott. Most of the estate temples does not come within the present boundary of Federal Territory, therefore contributing to the lack of emphasis on them. But some of them, especially the Sri Ayyanāreēswarar temple in Setapak which is one of the oldest temple in Kuala Lumpur, was formerly situated in a plantation estate. In the process of development in Kuala Lumpur, most of these estate temples were demolished.

It was also observed that Kunēswarar, Muniāndy and Māriamman temples are closely related with the lower income earning working class of South Indian origin. The Chettiyārs, since their migration to Malaysia, had temples built to preserve their religious interest. Their deity of preference is Subrahmanya and is reflected by the Śrī Thandāyuthabāni temple.⁷

7. Arasaratnam, Sinnappah, *ibid.*, p. 167.

Their way of administration leadership is determined by the number of shops that are owned by a specific member of the temple.

The Ceylonese with their preference for Ganēśha temples, had their employment in the Government service in good stead to help them to be religiously influential. The Śrī Sidhi Vināyagar temple and some large temples in Petaling Jaya were built by the Ceylonese, who have their own association, the Selangor Ceylonese Saivite Association situated in the premises of the Sri Kandaswāmy temple in Jalan Scott.

The North Indians, with their belief in Vaishnavism, had temples erected in dedication to Krishna, Rāma and Anūmar. With their strong financial position in the business line, the North Indians were able to build temples according to Hindu Āgamas and ensure the smooth running of the temples. The Lakshmi Narayanan temple in Jalan Ipoh were built by a North Indian businessman, Makhanlal together with similar businessmen in textiles.

Even though there are specific temples built by specific sub-ethnic groups, it is interesting to note that under the Malaysian context, there is no strict adherence for a devotee to go to a temple built by his sub-ethnic group. It is common to see Malaysians of South Indian origin going to temples which are owned by the Ceylonese or the Chettiyārs.

The author, with the help of a preliminary census of Hindu temples done by the Malaysia Hindu Sangam in May 1984 was able to locate the temples to trace their developments. The census, conducted under a short period, accounted for only 90 temples. The author was able to locate another ten temples in the course of this study even though it is roughly estimated that there are around 120 temples in Kuala Lumpur.

TABLE 2.3: Establishment of Hindu Temples According to Main Deities

Deity*	Total	1850-1900	1901-50	1951-60	1961-70	1971-84	Not Accounted
Śiva	9	1	3	1	2	1	1
Dēvi	35	1	8	6	13	5	2
Ganēsha	13	-	6	3	2	2	-
Murugaṇ	6	2	1	1	1	1	-
Munēswarar	27	-	10	6	8	3	-
Muniāṇḍy	3	-	-	-	1	-	2
Vishṇu	4	-	1	-	1	1	1
Not accounted	3	-	1	-	-	1	1
Total	100	4	30	17	28	14	7

Source: Malaysia Hindu Sangam

*Murugaṇ also refers to Subrahmanya. Vishṇu also refers to Krishna, Rama and Anumar, Rāna and Anūmar

It is noticed that there are 35 temples which are dedicated to Devi and 27 temples for Munēswarar. This clearly shows the persistence of village Gods from South India, whose people formed the estate plantations. Dēvi, in this aspect, also refers to temples dedicated to Māriamman, Kāliamman, Nagēswari, Rajeswari, Parasakti and Angaleswari.

Between the years 1901 to 1950, there were thirty temples built at a time when the Indian immigrants began to settle down in Malaysia and wanted their religious heritage to be continued. Another big increase in the number of temples were seen from 1961 to 1970 whereby 28 temples were established in which ten temples were founded by individuals.

There were more temples built in places of high Indian population concentration compared with areas of low Indian population. The Sentul area which also includes Jalan Ipoh have twelve temples. Devotees in Brickfields and Dungsar (including Jalan Pantai) can attend prayers in these two areas which have eleven temples each. The Cheras locality comes next with seven temples followed by Sungai Besi with six temples and Kampung Pandan (including Jalan Cochrane) which has five temples. All these temples in a specific area are situated within walking distance from one temple to another. Most of the other temples are scattered around in different parts of Kuala Lumpur.

2.4 Categorization of Temples

The task of categorising the hundred temples was a difficult one because information regarding some temples are still vague. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to divide these temples according to types of management, registration, land ownership, building structure and consecration ceremony.

2.4.1 Registration

From Table 2.4, it can be clearly seen that there are 27 registered temples, 61 unregistered temples and 12 shrines, especially those located at road-junctions and trees. To simplify explanations in this study, the author had classified these three types of temples into Category A, Category B and Category C temples respectively.

Registered means that the existence of these temples are certified legal according to the law by the Government. Out of the 27 registered temples, nine temples are dedicated to Dēvi and seven to Ganēsha. Most of these temples were built between 1900-1950 and hence was able to register quite easily with the Registrar of Societies. After the Merdeka period until the present, strict laws were imposed on the registration procedures, hereby contributing to the many temples which were unable to register themselves.

The impact created by the South Indian immigrants is quite evident among the unregistered temples. Temples dedicated to their preferred deities, which are Dēvi and Munēswarar totals up to 24 and 20 temples respectively. Most of these temples can be found in areas of high Indian population, especially in Sentul, Brickfields and Bungsar. Dēvi temples that comes under this category are mainly Kāliamman and Māriamman temples, which has found its place among the Indian labourers in the Government services.

It was quite difficult for the author to locate the wayside shrines which totalled twelve, mainly because they were situated in places where one least expects the presence of a temple. Information regarding these shrines was difficult to obtain because there was no key-informants to give briefings on these shrines. These shrines appear to exist only temporarily because their upkeep were either neglected or were just left there by the individuals or groups who build them.

2.4.2 Management

To explain clearly the state of management of temples in Kuala Lumpur, the author had divided it into four groups which are proper management, small management, individual management and also those temples which were not ascertained their management due to lack of information(refer to Table 2.4).

Proper management refers to the temples which have a efficient committee with allowance for various other sub-committees such as education, sports, cultural and social committees which cater to the needs of the devotees. These temples also have well-established persons as their patrons and also a board of trustees who make important decisions pertaining to the continuity of the temple.

This type of management is quite obvious among the Śrī Kandaswāmy temple, Śrī Mahā Māriamman or the Śrī Āthīswaran temple in Sentul. These temples are quite old, somewhere around seventy to a hundred years, but somehow they manage to survive and extend their premises due to their proper management in the long run. Besides their well-organised administration, they also employ Brāhmin priests or kurukkal, either from India or locally and conduct elaborate worship in their temples.

Small management boards which run temples are usually comprised of ten to fifteen members but lack the manpower of the proper management temples. The fact that 62 temples come under this category shows that these temples need to have more capable and young blood in their committees to ensure that the temples keep on functioning.

22 temples are being managed by individuals. Most of these temples were built on Government land and was founded by the individual himself. Some of these temples are also situated beside the house of the individual concerned. The individual

Table 2.4: Categorization of Hindu Temples According to Registration, Management, Land Ownership, Building Structure and Consecration Ceremony

Deity	Total	Registration			Management				Land Ownership				Building Structure				Consecration Ceremony		
		Registered	Unregistered	Shrine	Proper Management	Small Management	Individual	Not Ascertained	Own Land	Private Land	Government Land	Not Ascertained	Permanent (brick)	Semi-Permanent (half brick plank)	Temporary (fully plank)	Not Ascertained	Consecrated	Not Consecrated	Not Ascertained
Śiva	9	3	5	1	2	5	1	1	3	1	5	-	4	2	3	-	5	4	-
Dēvi	35	9	24	2	2	24	8	1	4	7	24	-	8	21	6	-	17	18	-
Gaṇeśha	13	7	4	2	3	8	2	-	4	2	7	-	5	5	3	-	6	7	-
Muruga	6	2	4	-	2	3	1	-	2	-	4	-	3	3	-	-	4	2	-
Munēswara	27	4	20	3	1	19	7	-	2	3	22	-	3	16	8	-	12	15	-
Muniandy	3	-	1	2	-	-	2	1	-	-	2	1	-	1	2	-	-	3	-
Viṣṇu	4	2	2	-	1	2	-	1	1	-	3	-	2	-	2	-	2	2	-
Not Accounted	3	-	1	2	-	1	1	1	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	3	-
Total	100	27	61	12	11	62	22	5	16	13	70	1	25	48	27	-	46	54	-

Source: Malaysia Hindu Sangam



REX JAN 85

Photo 3: A Category A Temple
Sri Raja Rajeswari Temple, Ampang



FOTOKINA JAN. 85

Photo 4: A Category B Temple
Sri Kaliyamman Temple Sentul Pasar



Photo 5: A Category C Temple
 Śrī Śiva Śakthi Temple Jalan Davidson

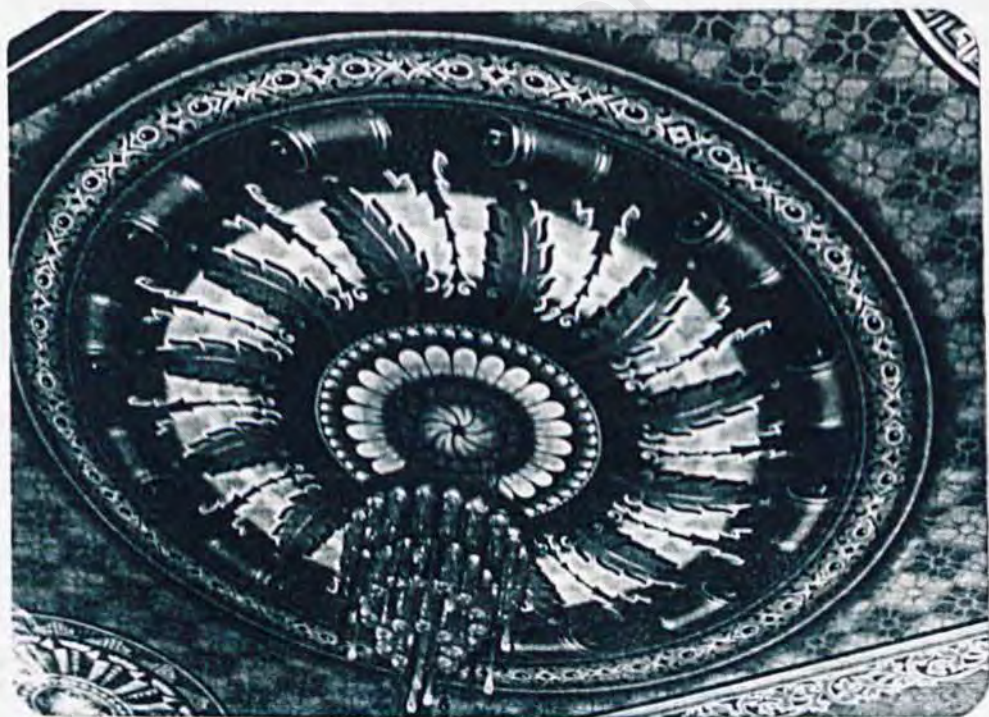


Photo 6: Designs on the ceiling
 Śrī Mahā Māriamman Temple

usually has the final say in any matters regarding the temple.

Management of five temples were not ascertained by the author because it was not possible to contact anyone who is responsible to these temples to give information regarding their management. These temples were just left at their respective places without any concern by the people regarding their maintenance and renovations.

2.4.3 Size

To categorize the temples according to sizes is a difficult thing to do because there were no criteria to be followed. The author was given a classification of the sizes of the temples as big, moderate and small.

The big temples are also derived at by the area of the land. The Śrī Āthīswaran temple, with its land area of 320,000 square feet is expected to be the largest temple in Kuala Lumpur when it will be built in a few years time. Big temples also have extra building premises, like a wedding reception hall, a big kitchen, a dressing room and enough space in between to enable people to walk around. The average holding capacity of these temples are 500 persons although it may exceed, like the Lakṣmī Narayanan temple which can hold 1,500 persons.

The moderate temples have an average area between 800 to 2,000 square feet, like the Kālī temple in Sungai Besi which

covers 1,200 square feet. These temples do not have a wedding reception hall because of its size and furthermore, ceremonial marriages are not held here. Their average holding capacity is around a hundred persons, like the Śrī Munēswarar temple in Jalan Raja Laut. It is quite common to see paṇṭarāms or pūjāris conducting pūjās in these temples.

The small sized temples refers to the shrines which are quite small when compared with the big and moderate sized temples. These shrines, like the Śrī Vināyagar temple in Brickfields covers only 90 square feet and this area would be more smaller if it is a road-junction or a tree shrine. Holding capacities for these shrines is around 10 persons, like the Śivan temple in Jalan Davidson.

2.5 Development of Hindu Temples

To further analyse the factors contributing to the development of temples in Kuala Lumpur, emphasis should also be placed on land ownership, construction and labour, consecration ceremony and statuary.

2.5.1 Land Ownership

In Kuala Lumpur, it was found that sixteen temples are located in their own land. These are some of the early temples, built by businessmen and middle class Indians who was

able to acquire land at that time to establish the temples. These temples, without any disturbance from the Government authorities, was able to grow in size and eventually are large as what can be seen today.

There are thirteen temples situated in land owned by private concerns. These temples can be destroyed at any moment because of their illegal existence, like the Śaktī Vināyagar temple in Brickfields which is built on a construction company's land. Some of these temples are also given permit by the owner or the land is leased out to the temples.

Temples that were established on land belonging to the Government, perhaps causes the biggest problem that are being faced by the temples in Kuala Lumpur. The fact that seventy temples were built on Government land does not augur well for its continued existence in the near future. Most of the temples were on land belonging to the Railways, Armed Forces, National Electricity Board, Drainage and Irrigation Department and the Health Ministry.

These temples face the grim prospect of being demolished when more areas are expected to be opened to give way for national development. These temples had either to be relocated elsewhere or destroyed altogether.* The Sri Ayyanāreēswarar temple, situated

*The Tamil Nesan (10.5.1984) p. 1.

on land belonging to the Army had been issued with demolition notice.

2.5.2 Construction and Labour

Most of the Category A temples have a building structure made entirely out of brick. Temples which are financially sound, had made use of their resources to furnish their temples well with tiles and other types of flooring. Building of these 25 temples were given to Chinese contractors who performed the job quite well with Indian labourers working as contract labourers.

The Category B temples totalling 48 have a semi-permanent building structure which is half brick and half plank. Construction of these temples were mostly done from the voluntary help of the youths and members of the community. These temples are not well-maintained, mainly because it can be destroyed anytime because of their location on land belonging to the Government.

The remaining Category B and Category C temples totalling 27 were built temporarily which are fully plank. Their size are quite small and again voluntary labour was called in to build these temples.

2.5.3 Consecration Ceremony

Consecration ceremony on Kumbāpisēkām is a elaborate process of rituals done by a temple to sanctify itself. It is

also done to mark the spot for the devas and invite them to establish residence. It is their presence which sanctifies the building and makes it be known as a temple.

Consecration ceremony also serves as an official opening ceremony of a particular temple. This ceremony is done with the help of Brāhmin Kurukkals from India and also local kurukkals. Only registered and well-established temples could afford to hold such a ceremony because of the high expenses. Besides a week-long ceremony, the temple must also bear other expenses like food, payment for kurukkals and other helpers, things used and other miscellaneous items.

It is also a practice for temples to conduct the consecration ceremony in every twelve years. What the temples with financial constraints does are just re-painting and making minor renovations. Some of the Category A temples celebrate this ceremony in a grand manner, like the ones conducted by the Śrī Kandaswāmy temple and the Śrī Thandāyuthabāni temple for a week, with the service of local and foreign Brāhmin kurukkals.

Under this study, it was found that a total of 46 temples had performed their consecration ceremonies. More than half of this total consisted of Category A temples. Most of the temples under Category B which had their temples consecrated was not able to get enough financial support to carry out this ceremony after every twelve years.

54 temples, mostly from Category B and C was not able to hold a consecration ceremony. Almost twenty temples were built by individuals, who were unable to raise enough money to have the ceremony. Another reason might be the struggle of these temples to overcome the monopoly of Brāhmin kurukkals regarding rituals in the temples. The role of kurukkals can be minimized to a certain extent if consecration ceremonies are not held.

2.5.4 Statuary

The statues found inside the Hindu temples are very abstract and are generally black in colour. These statues are made by qualified sculptors in India out of "karungkal", a durable and unbreakable stone. The statues will be placed tightly in its place by a special kind of glue, which will reveal some cracks or loosening after eleven years. That is why it is necessary to have a consecration ceremony to put these statues firmly back for another eleven or twelve years.

Besides statues of the main deities like Śiva, Gaṇēśha or Murugan, there are also another black stone, called the pali-
peetam and statues resembling the vehicles for the God, represented by a particular animal, for example a peacock for Murugan. The statues on gopurams display a spectacular artesian skills are embroided in attractive colours.

In Kuala Lumpur, most of the statues were ordered specially from India. These statues are purchased directly by

the temples whereas in some other cases, statues are donated by the members of public, out from their private collection as a means of repaying a vow taken.

2.6 Architecture

Architecture and matters pertaining to structure of temples are done by the hereditary temple builders, known as "stapathis" from India who are called to design and construct the temples. Most of the stapathis from India were engaged in designing the architecture of the Category A temples.

The 'Śrī Rāmalinga Iēswarar temple in Jalan Maarof which is under construction, engaged the services of stapathis from South India to design the main arch and other small designs for the temple. An informal interview by the author with one of them revealed that they have to undergo three years of education in temple architecture, to obtain a diploma. This occupation was passed on to him by his father, who was also a stapathi.

The Category B and Category C temples also have their own architecture but due to their financial difficulties, they could not afford to employ stapathis. What they did was to employ local artists to draw most of the designs according to the Category A temples. The fact that these temples were made from planks and wood fails to reveal a form of architecture similar to the ones found in Category A temples.



FOTOKINA JAN 85

Photo 7: Rajagopuram

Sri Kandaswamy Temple Jalan Scott



FOTOKINA JAN 86

Photo 8: Rajagopuram

Sri Mahā Mariamman Temple
Jalan Bandar

2.7 Financial Aspect

Perhaps the biggest problem that the temples face today is finance. Individuals who build temples, are unable to maintain the temples and it could not be surprising to see the temples left deserted.

Some of the Category A temples were able to get grants from the Government to build their temples. The Śrī Maha Māriamman temple received \$200,000 whereas the Śrī Paranjothy Vināyagar temple in Jalan Ipoh got \$50,000 from the Selangor state. Other than that, the expenses incurred in building a temple were borne by businessmen and members of the public through donations.

The role played by non-Hindus to help the upkeep of the temples, should not be overlooked. The Chinese businessmen had donated generously for the maintenance of various aspects of the temples. The Angalaiswari temple in Brickfields was built by a Chinese on his own land as repayment of a vow taken by him. It is now being run by an individual, but it is mainly sponsored by the Chinese. A common sight is the presence of Chinese joss-sticks in this temple. The Indians do not seem to mind this because they do not see this aspect as a threat to their worship.

All the temples have to solve their financial problems if they are to continue. A special donation box or "undial" is placed at the entrance of every temple, for the public to donate for the maintenance of the temple concerned.



FOTOKINA JAN. 85

Photo 9: Consecration Ceremony

Pouring of the sanctified water to
the kalasams at the temple gopurams



FOTOKINA JAN. 85

Photo 10: Influence of Chinese Religion

Sri Angalaiswari Temple Brickfields.
Note the Chinese joss-sticks in the foreground.

CHAPTER III

RITUALS AND FESTIVALS OF HINDU TEMPLES
IN KUALA LUMPUR

3.1 Rituals of a Temple

Rituals that are performed in a temple consist essentially of an invocation, reception and entertainment of God as a royal guest. They normally consist of invocation by which the omnipresent God is invited to direct his attention to the particular worship; offering of a seat, of water, of a bath, a garment, a sacred thread, perfumes, flowers, incense, a lamp, food and homage; and a circumambulation of the image.¹

Generally, there are seven times when worship are held: at five, six and nine in the morning, at noon, and at six, eight and ten in the evening.² Strict adherence to these times depends on the financial position of the temples. The Mahāmāriamman temple conducts worship six times a day. Smaller temples normally have worship twice a day. In some cases, where financial aid is hard to acquire, temples, especially those managed by individuals, conducts worship only once a week which is usually on Fridays.

1. The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 8 (pg. 901).

2. M. Arunachalam, Festivals of Tamil Nadu (1980).

Rituals that are performed can be clearly divided into three parts which are abisēkam, pūjā and arccanai.

3.1.1 Abisēkam

Abisēkam is the first item of the rituals in a temple. It is the bathing of the image of God, which is referred to as Thirumanjanam or God's bath. Before the start of the ritual, temples are washed and cleaned. In most of the temples, this is done by the priest himself with the voluntary help of youths. In category A temples, workers are given this task.

What is done to God during abisēkam resembles what man does to himself. Just as man takes his bath and put on new clothes, the same is done for the God. Besides water, the image is bathed with milk, fruit, tender coconut water, ghee, honey, tiruneeru (holy ash) and rosewater.

The image will then be decorated, usually a cloth is used to cover up the deity. This process is called Alankaram in which garlands are put on the deity. Neivedhiyam (food)* will be offered along with Dhupa (incense) and Deepa (light) by the priest.

Due to lack of personnel, most temples from Category B and C do not perform the abisēkam in all its stages. These

*Neivedhiyam is usually rice cooked with brown sugar together with beans.

temples have no choice but only to do one or two main aspects of the abisēkam.

3.1.2 Pūjā

Pūjā is part of the temple worship which is meaningful in all its aspects. Most of the temples in Kuala Lumpur conduct their pūjās twice a day. This decision is made by the management committee, taking into account the number of personnel available. The author also came to know that the Sri Munēswarar temple in Jalan Cheras conduct pūjās on Friday evenings only. The remaining temples make it a point to have pūjās on every Tuesdays and Fridays only.

In most of the temples, it is common to observe two kinds of pūjās. The first is the ordinary one whereas the other one is the special (visasar) pūjā which is usually done on Friday evenings where a big crowd is expected to come to the temple. Friday is picked as an auspicious day because all the nine planets which forms the navakkirakaṅkal sit in the best situation. This could enable easier contact with the inner worlds.

When the special pūjā is carried out, one must concentrate their mind on the objects of significance that are used. It can be noticed that flames or deepam are used frequently. This is because flames are always visible to the three worlds. That is why flames have always been the focus of ritual in the pūjā.

They are powerful door-openers to the inner worlds.

First of all, the Alangara Deepam is shown. The deepam or any other objects will be shown thrice by the kurukkal in the form of the Tamil word "om" before the deity.* The Othai (Single) Deepam follows next. Another deepam is used to respect the vahanam (vehicle) of the principal deity. In Ganēsha temples, Mushika or rat is the vahanam. Simba (lion) is the vahanam for Dēvi. Mayil or peacock is attached to Murugaṇ whereas Rishabawa (cow) is Śiva's vehicle.

As another mark of respect, the Kumba Deepam is waved followed by elaborate objects like Kudai (umbrella), Alavadham (leaf), Visiri (fan), Venjamaram (broom), kodi (flag), kannadi (mirror) and Karpura Deepam. All these actions are the same as that which was done to the kings of India. In a way, God is treated as a king.

Recital of the mantras in Sanskrit is done by the kurukkal which amounts up to 108 verses. Different mantras are used for different deities and the mantras is another way of respecting the deities and praising their greatness. The recital is usually accompanied together with the throwing of flowers and a type of grass called "argan".

*The objects are shown in a clockwise direction.

In the case of Māriamman, Kunkumam, which is a red powder put on the forehead for married ladies, is used for throwing when the recital is being done. A procedure named as "panchaliti" is done whereby a Karpura Deepam is waved again. This deepam has either five or seven steps, indicating that man must go up step by step in order to achieve salvation. In other words, when the camphor burns on the seventh step, it turns to smoke and goes up which reflects our intentions to get salvation.

Verses of the various vedas are recited as a mark of satisfaction to God. In this matter, verses from the Rig Veda, Ajurva Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvene Veda are picked. The kurukkal will then indicate that the holy songs to be sung which are called "Thirumurai" or Pancapuranam (5 types). The songs that are devoted to the God comprise Thēvāram, Thiruvāsagam, Thiruvāsapar, Thirupālandu, Thirupurānam and finally a special song.

The Karpura Deepam is shown again, an action referred to as "arati" and the deepam is sent around the temple to be graced by everybody. When the deepam comes to a person, he will clasp his hands and put his palms just above the flame and bring the hands back to his face. Prasadam is distributed which includes vibhūti (holy ash), thirtham (holy water and milk), santhanam (sandal paste), kunkumam and flowers.

During the ordinary pūjās, the above procedures are simplified. Only the Othai Deepam and Karpura Deepam are used

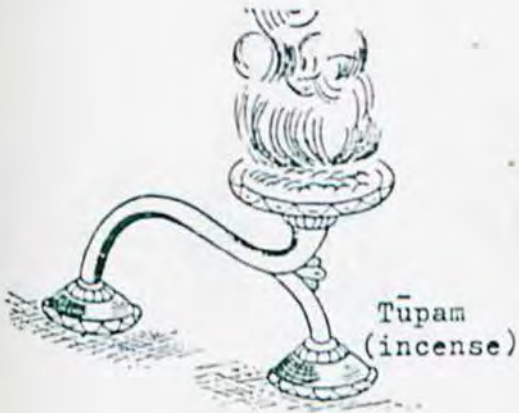
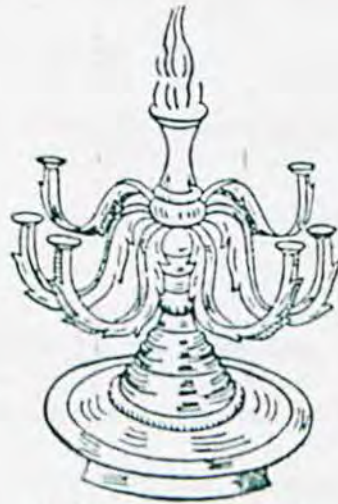
Table 3.1 Different Types of Deepam

Table 3.2 Objects used during pūjā

Kumba Deepam

Yellumuka Karpura
Deepam

Othai Deepam



Kudai



Alavadham



Kodi



Kannadi



Visiri



Venjamaram

followed by the recital of 108 verses of mantras. Finally the Karpura Deepam or Othai Deepam is shown to be graced by everybody present in the temple and prasadam is offered.

3.1.3 Arccanai

If a devotee wishes to receive the deity's blessing for something special that is happening in their lives, they may request an arccanai, \$1 for the coconut arccanai and 50 cents for the fruit arccanai.

Arccanai is done after the pūjā is over. A person had to tell his name, with which the kurukkal intones before the Deity along with Sanskritic verses. It is also important to mention one's birthstar and zodiac sign.

The contents of a coconut arccanai usually consist of half a coconut, two leaves, betel nuts, two bananas, vibhūti and flowers.

The leaves signifies our two types of body which are the mental and physical body. The leaves are given so that the devotee would have a healthy body without any sickness. The betels are specifically for wealth whereas the two bananas reflect the good and the bad deeds that man undergoes. The coconut resembles a human's head and among others, it stands for intelligence, clear thinking and sympathy.

3.2 Temple Priests

Priests who conduct worship in temples in Kuala Lumpur can be divided into three distinct groups according to their knowledge of the religion and social background. They are the kurukkal Brāhmins, Panṭārams and pūjāris.

The kurukkal Brāhmins are priests who have undergone religious training in India and are well-versed with Sanskritic mantras.³ Even though some of these kurukkals are from India, but this group consist of a low number because of difficulties in acquiring the services of other local Brāhmins. Most of the younger Brāhmins opt to work in the government or private sectors where they can earn more. These people adhere strictly to vegetarian food. The training that the kurukkals undergo takes a few years. The kurukkal in the Jalan Pasar Vināyagar temple underwent the priesthood course in Tanjore, India which lasted seven years before he was claimed as a full-fledged kurukkal.

Most of the kurukkals in Kuala Lumpur wear a thread^d or "punal" which is swung over the shoulders. These threads are said to be constrained with certain grades of achievement by the kurukkal. Three threads indicate that he is a bachelor. Six threads shows that the kurukkal has married and nine threads

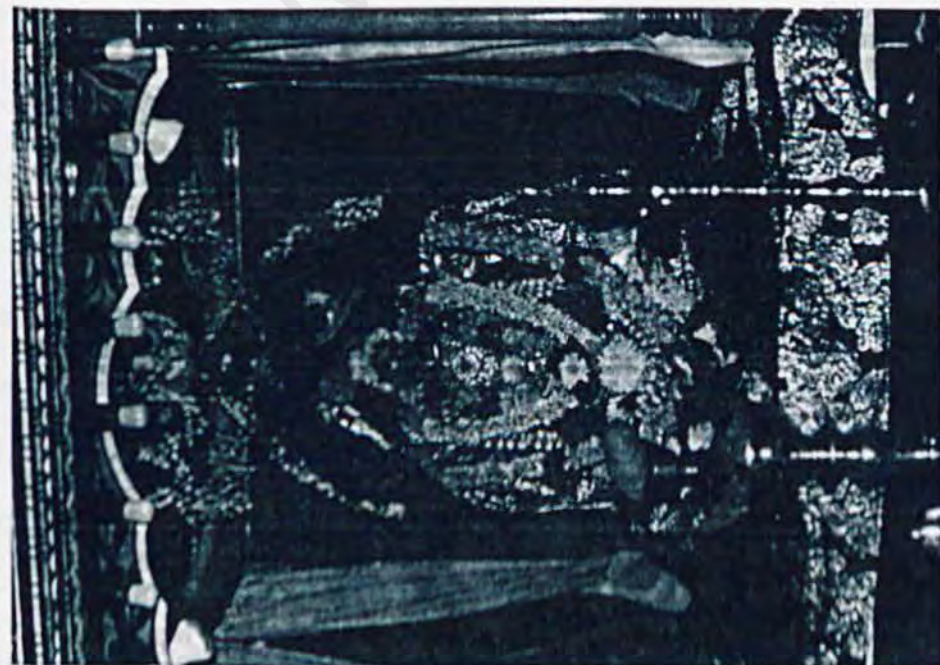
3. Dubois, Abbe J.A., Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies (1968) p. 376.

marks his first child. When the kurukkal wears twelve threads, he is known as Gurupatham who has rights to do any type of pūjās. In most of the Category A temples, the kurukkals play the main role in conducting the various pūjās and religious functions.

The pantarams are non-Brāhmin priests who are also well-versed in Sanskritic mantras. Unfortunately due to the presence of the kurukkals who are traditionally inclined to priesthood, these pantarams serve the purpose as assistants to the kurukkals for any religious undertakings in a Category A temple.

The lack of kurukkals has paved the way for these pantarams to take over as the main priests in Category B temples. Some of them are even sent to India to learn more about Sanskritic mantras in a bid to get more non-Brāhmins to be interested in priesthood.

The third category of priests in the temples are called pūjāris. In the situation that arise in Kuala Lumpur, these pūjāris consists of low caste members who performs pūjās in some of the Category B and Category C temples. These pūjāris also happens to be the individual owners of a specific temple which they themselves founded and built. In a temple in Jalan Pantai, a fifteen year old son of the owner performs the pūjā which he learned from his father, who lacks the fundamental knowledge of religion.



FOTOKINA JAN 88

Photo 11: Ganesha



FOTOKINA JAN 88

Photo 12: Siva, in the form of Nataraja,
the Cosmic Dancer

ERPUSTAKA
AN ANTROPOMORFISME

These three categories of priests live in different settings altogether. The kurukkals, by virtue of being employed in Category A temples are given a room to stay with his family so that any prior consultation regarding religious matters can be channelled to him promptly. Some kurukkals, for example, from the Court Hill Ganēsar temple, stay in a house near the temple. The kurukkals find their jobs well playing whereby some can even afford to maintain a car.*

Total income that a kurukkal get varies according to the Hindu calendar months. They are paid a monthly salary between \$200-\$300. Besides this, in cases where the arccanai comes under the supervision of the kurukkal, he earns much more. Some kurukkals are allowed to earn extra money outside their daily duties in the temple. Attending and officiating in functions like cremation, birth of a child or marriage proves to be lucrative enough for them.

The paṇṭārams and pūjāris earn less than the kurukkal because it is difficult to compete with the kurukkals who are well-versed in religious matters. These group of priests manage to survive by being government servants, which gives them more time to concentrate as part-time priests. This should not necessarily be true because some pūjāris perform their duties strictly on a voluntary basis, and also according to them, to serve God.

*The author came across 3 kurukkals who owns a car and also properties in India.

3.3 Temple Assistants

The temple assistants comprise drummers (melavattiyam), clarinet musicians (natasvaram), ctūvar and sweepers as well as general workers. They are employed mainly by well-established temples in some Category A who can afford to pay them for their services. Some temples, like Śrī Kandaswāmy temple is financially sound enough to engage the services of a gardener to beautify the outer surroundings of the temple.

Most of these assistants are of the lower income earning group and to make ends meet, they have to look for part time assignments elsewhere. There are no such assistants employed by the Category B and Category C temples and just like the priests, these assistants (namely drummers and musicians) are called by these temples to render their services in some important festivals or weddings. These assistants are also allowed to perform in other temples as long as it does not clash with their daily chores.

It was clearly visible that the profession of being drummers and musicians was a hereditary occupation. The drummer in Śrī Kandaswāmy temple happens to be the third generation that works in the temple. The sons of these musicians are encouraged to take over their parents profession at an early age and it is obvious to see these youngsters more inclined to their traditions.

Another distinctive group of temple assistants that

the author came across are the "voluntary assistants." This group consists of youths from the same locality or children of the temple committee members. This group can be seen giving help doing the various chores whenever festivals or weddings are celebrated in the temples.

3.4 The Main Deities

It is very common to see that in most of the temples in Kuala Lumpur, there will be a major deity with two accompanying deities. The Vināyagar temple in Jalan Pasar has Lord Gaṇēsha as the main deity with Lord Muruga and Ambal* as the accompanying deities. In almost all the temples, it is a must to have Lord Gaṇēsha.

3.4.1 Lord Gaṇēsha

Gaṇēsha is a word derived from the Sanskrit roots "Gana", meaning "the hosts, multitudes or troupes of inferior deities, especially the retinue of Lord Śiva under the rule of Gaṇēsha, and "Isha", meaning "ruler, lord, supreme God or sovereign".

As Ganapati, Lord Gaṇēsha is the leader of the Ganas, ruling over the celestial world. He is the eldest son of Śiva and with his elephant head, he is the more easily recognized divinity. Just as an elephant can clear the jungle, He is also

*Ambal is another name for Dēvi.

believed to clear path towards divinity.

As Vighnēśvara, He is Lord of Obstacles, creating difficulties and obstructions if the time is wrong for us to proceed and removing those same obstacles when our success is assured. Because of this wisdom, He is invoked first before beginning anything.⁴ He is also called as Vināyaga, Anaimuha or Ainkaran.

In Kuala Lumpur, there are about thirteen temples dedicated to Lord Gaṇēśha. It is also obvious to see a lot of devotees come to these temples to pray to Him whenever examinations had to be done.

3.4.2 Lord Murugan

Murugan means beauty and is also worshipped as Kandan, Velan, Kumaran, Shanmugam, Dandepani, Saravanan and Subramaniya. Lord Murugan is the younger brother of Gaṇēśha. Murugan can be seen riding on his peacock, holding his weapons, a sharp spear (vel).

This weapon is used to destroy our ignorance gradually until we are able to see Truth. In Kuala Lumpur, there are about six temples in Murugan's honour.

4. Mialaret, Jean-Pierre, Hinduism in Singapore (1969) p. 24.

3.4.3 Māriamman

There are lot of stories to describe the origin of Māriamman. One states that she was wife of the Tamil poet Tiruvalluvar. When she got small-pox, she went to houses, begging for food and fanning herself with margosa leaves. When she recovered, the people worshipped her as the goddess of small-pox, and hung up margosa leaves over their doors to keep the small-pox away.⁵

In the role of Śaktī, the consort of Śiva, she has two personalities, one that is gentle and the other ferocious. She assumes a fearsome character when Śiva sends her to punish certain demons. In this mood, she appears as Durga or Mahā Kālī and has ten arms with ten destructive weapons. If she is yellow skinned, she rides a tiger. If she is black-skinned, she had a lolling tongue dripping blood, with garlands of skulls and snakes.⁶

From a village goddess, she has grown in prominence and it is not surprising to see temples built to remember her. There are 35 temples dedicated to her in Kuala Lumpur.

5. Whitehead, Henry, Village Gods to South India (1976) p. 112.

6. Mialaret, Jean Perie, *ibid.*



FOTOKINA JAN. 88

Photo 13: Māriamman



FOTOKINA JAN. 88

Photo 14: Murugan

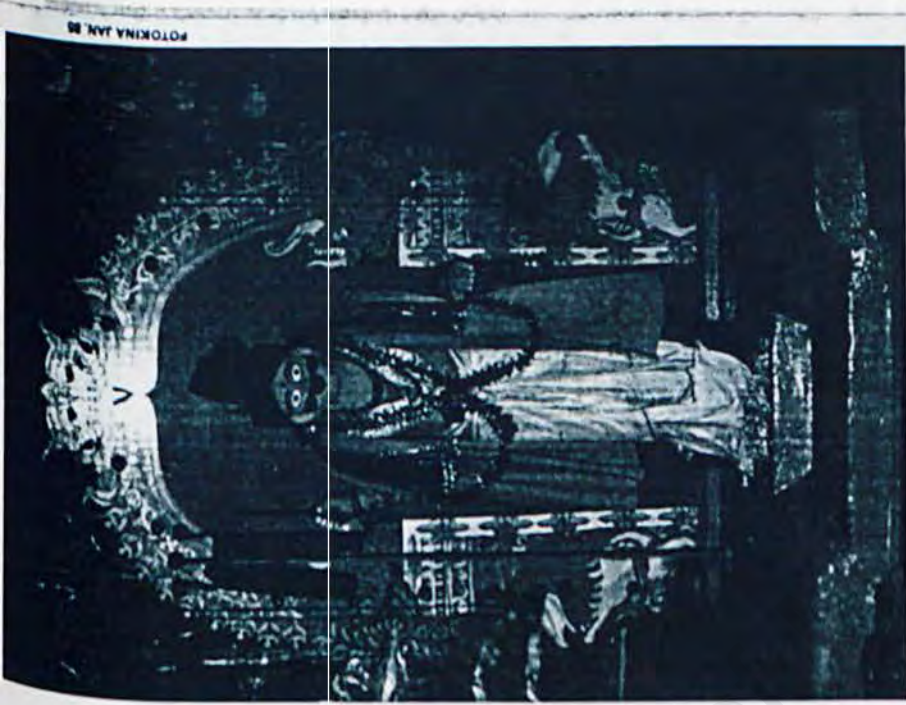


Photo 16: Munēswarār

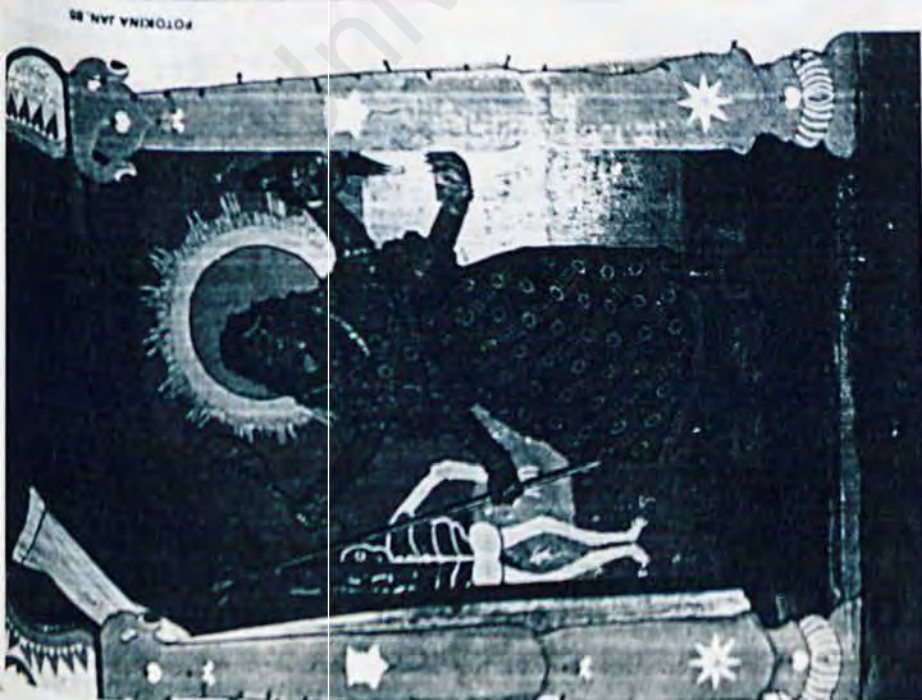
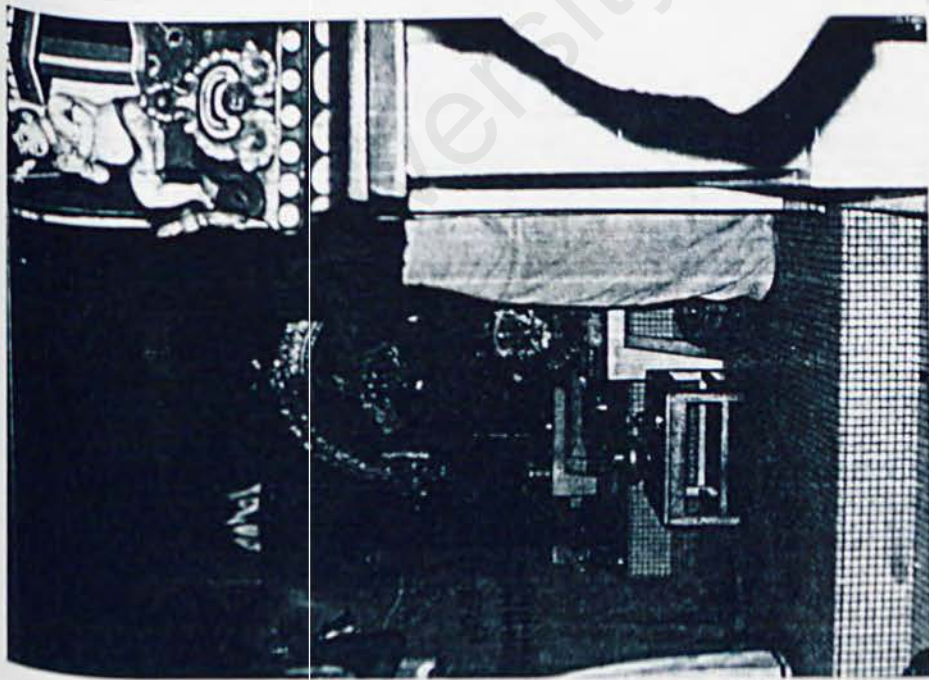
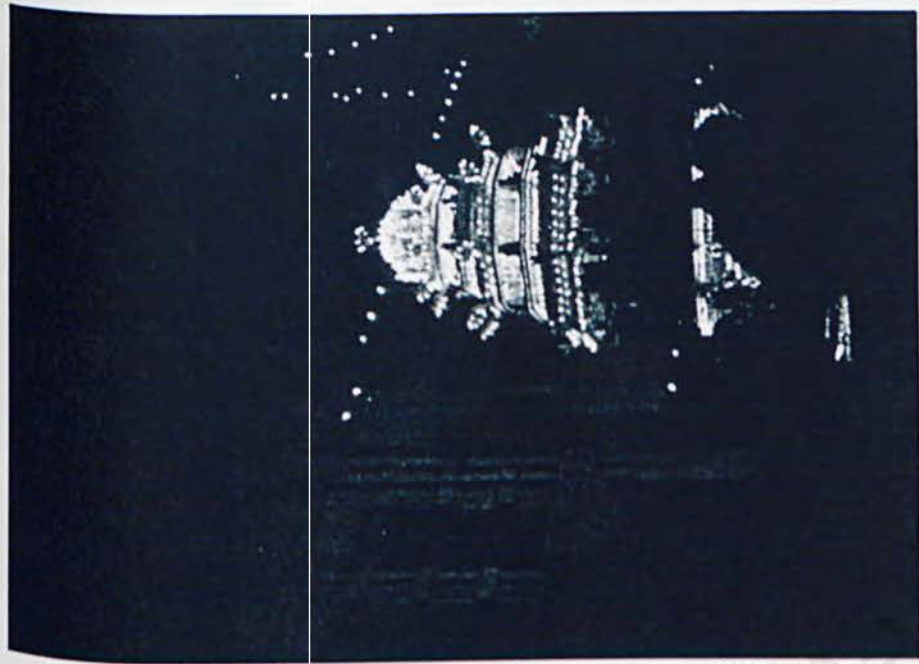


Photo 15: Kāliamman



FOTOKINA JAN. 66

Photo 17: Arati - climax of
the pūjā



FOTOKINA JAN. 66

Photo 16: Thaipusam: chariot procession

3.4.4 Lord Śiva

Lord Śiva is the creator of the Universe and also reflected as Parasivam or Satchi dananda or the Supreme Being. He assumes the role of destroyer but he annihilates in order to reconstruct.

Śiva is represented on the altars by the lingam or phallic symbol, signifying the role of reproduction in his character and he is worshipped universally in this form. There are nine temples named after Him.

3.5 Conduct in Temple

The ringing of bells in the temple serves as an information, telling the people that something good is going to happen. A devotee, before he goes to a temple, must take a bath.

At the entrance of the temple, he should clasp his hand in prayer to the raja gopura. Once he enters, he should put his footwear aside and wash his feet. He should pray to Lord Gaṇeśha before he prays to Ambal and Murugaṇ.

If a pūjā is in progress, the devotee should participate in it. In Kuala Lumpur temples, it is usual to see men on the right side and the women on the left side of the altar whenever any religious function takes place. At the end of the pūjā, he should grace the Karpma Deepam that is passed around, take the

prasadam that includes vibhuti, holy water and sandalwood paste. If he so desires, he can ask the priest for an arccanai.

He should not forget to perform the "pradakshina", a process whereby a devotee walks around the temple or the main deity three times in a clock-wise direction. Then for a minute or more, he should sit down solemnly in prayer, facing the east. He can, if he had taken a vow, present a garland of flowers, burn camphor, offer fruits or break coconuts.

3.6 Upayams

Upayams are taken as a vow by one or more person or a particular group to meet the expenses of a religious event in a temple. The person who takes up the upayam are called upayakararkal. Taking up of upayams helps to ease the financial burden of the temples.

When the calendar year for a specific temple is drawn up, there will be an allocation to specify persons or groups who had volunteered to take a particular religious event. In Mahā Māriamman temple, due to the special organisational set-up, one can see that upayams are taken by tradesmen like taxi drivers upayam or Milk Vendors upayam.

If a festival is elaborate like Navarathiri which takes 9 days, each day is shared by different parties. In some temples, it is fixed that a person or group take up a specific festival annually.

The upayakararkal had to buy the items that will be used in the temple during the festival, mainly milk, beans, ghee, holy water, flowers, fruits, rice, sugar, bananas, coconuts and other miscellaneous items. In return they will get a special arccanai or abisekam.


These upayams had also indirectly been associated with caste groups. A particular group who performs a upayam in Mahā Māriamman temple is directed to his caste members only. The lack of knowledge regarding this matter makes people from other castes also to join in the celebrations pertaining to the upayam.

3.7 Sacred Symbols in Hindu temples

There are various sacred symbols found in temples that everyone should know about. This will help them to have a better understanding about the significance of these objects and their relations to the temple.

A few important symbols are drawn below, together with a explanation of each of it to verify their importance.

Pranava Aum

The Pranava Aum denotes Nada, the Primal sound or Soundless Sound from which creation issues forth. The abbreviated Pranava symbol  is always placed on the top of written pages in remembrance of Him.



Tripundra and Pottu

The tripundra is the three stripes of vibhuti across the brow. Vibhuti connotes purity and the three lines signify the burning away of the triple bondage of ānava, karma and māyā. The pottu stimulates one's discrimination and spiritual insight.

Śiva Lingam

This stone pillar of indefinite mold is the most ancient symbol of God Śiva. The Lingam itself is Śiva as unmanifest Reality.

Swastika

This is the symbol of auspiciousness and good fortune. The word means "It is well".

Shadkonam

This six-pointed star is formed by two inter-locking triangles; the upper one stands for Śiva and fire while the lower one represents Sakti and water. Their union gives birth to Muruga.

Kalasa

Lord Ganēsha can be represented by a kalasa, a hushed coconut on a pot, circled by five mango leaves. The breaking of a coconut before His shrine represents the shattering of the human ego.

Kuthuvillaku

The standing oil lamp, or kuthuvillaku, burning in the temple or home, keeps the inner atmosphere pure and serene. The lighting up of a 'Kuthuvillaku' is common before opening any ceremony held outside the temple.

Homa

The homa or fire pit is the symbol of existing Vedic rites. It is through the element of fire that we make our special offerings to God and it is before the homa fire that marriages are solemnized.

Bilva

The Bilva or bael's tree's fruit, flowers and leaves are all sacred to Śiva. Planting bilva trees around a temple is highly meritorious and sanctifying.

Vel

The Vel, Lord Muruga's lance, is wide, long and sharp, signifying incisive discrimination and spiritual knowledge which must be broad, deep and penetrating.

Trisula

Trisula, Lord Siva's trident, is the royal sceptre of the saivadharmā. It stands for Desire, Action and Wisdom.

3.8 Role of Mediums

It was observed that the role of mediums in the temples had been drastically minimized and in some temples it does not exist. Category A temples, especially, denied engaging the services of mediums in any consultations mainly because they follow Sanskritic practices and do not want their reputation tarnished.

It is common to see mediums or "sāmiyādis" in temples dedicated to village Gods like Munēswarar, Muniāndy or Kāliamman but the author was only able to trace their existence in the Mahā Kāliamman temple Jalan Raja Muda and Angalaiswari temple in Jalan Ann Seng.

The mediums are sought after to give solutions or alternatives to overcome something bad that is happening in one's life.⁷ The medium in Jalan Raja Muda who is a woman goes into trance, possessed by Kālī every Tuesdays and Fridays and give solutions to problems of devotees and also informs how the pūjās should be done. This woman first experienced possession when she was twelve years old and had visited all the Kālī temples in India to enhance her spiritual knowledge.

The medium in Jalan Ann Seng who is a man of 34 years of age goes into trance on special functions, and devotees are allowed to ask for help in every aspect, including asking for three digit numbers. But the medium was not to be found when the author visited the temples in the area.

3.9 Animal Sacrifice

Animal sacrifice practices date back to Aryan times in India when out of devotion to God, the only sacrifice which the devotees would afford is the things they owned which were buffaloes, goats, chicken and sheep.

In Malaysia, especially in the rural areas, animal sacrifices are quite prevalent due to lack of education among the

7. Lawrence A. Babb, "Hindu Mediumship in Singapore", Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science, Vol. 2, Nos. 1-2.

elders. Efforts had been made by the well-established temples and various organisations to make the people realize that annual sacrifice is against ahimsa, especially when it is performed in the temple itself.

The practice of animal sacrifice were observed in at least three temples: Jalan Raja Muda, Jalan Ann Seng and Kāliamman temple in Jalan Cheras and one might see a co-relation of these temples with mediums. During festivals, especially the Temple Anniversary, devotees are allowed to sacrifice goats or chickens to pay penance for their God.

3.10 Festivals

Every temple in Kuala Lumpur has its calender to inform devotees what are the festivals that will be celebrated by the temple for a particular year. It is obvious that temples also concentrate lavishly on festivals that comemrates their main deities. A brief description is given below about some of the common festivals celebrated in Kuala Lumpur temples.

3.10.1 Thaipusam

One of the most popular festival is Thaipusam, occurring in the Tamil month of Thai, when the moon passes in front of the star, "Pusam". This festival is also as remembrance of Lord Murugan who vanquished the forces of evil and to thank him by means of a vow and the offering of a sacrifice or carrying the

kavadi. This is a semi-circular wooden or metal frame work, with cross-pieces designed to support the structure on the bearer's shoulder. The kavadi bearers also pierce their cheeks, tongues and body with skewers.⁸

The Śrī Māha Māriamman temple organises this festival in Batu Caves, and it has become nationwide as well as a tourist attraction centre. 300,000 devotees from Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka throng the Batu Caves grounds. A chariot procession carrying the image of the deity to and from Batu Caves adds to the glamour.

The devotee as well as the kavadi bearers had to ascend 272 steps before stopping in front of Murugan shrine to fulfill their vows. It is also a normality to see non-Indians carrying the kavadi. A lot of stalls are set up to cater for the people.

3.10.2 Navarathri

Navarathri (nine nights) is a special fasting period which falls during the growing period of the moon, of the 'Puratasi' month, i.e. the 1st to the 10th day of the New Moon.

This festival is to redeem all life from evil and to give purity and goodness and is celebrated grandly in Dēvi temples. Parvathy, Lakshmi and Saraswathy fuse into one form called Durga and perform feats, penance and worship during the nine days. The tenth day marks the victory of good over evil which is known as

8. Arasaratnam, S., Indian Festivals in Malaya (1966) p. 7.

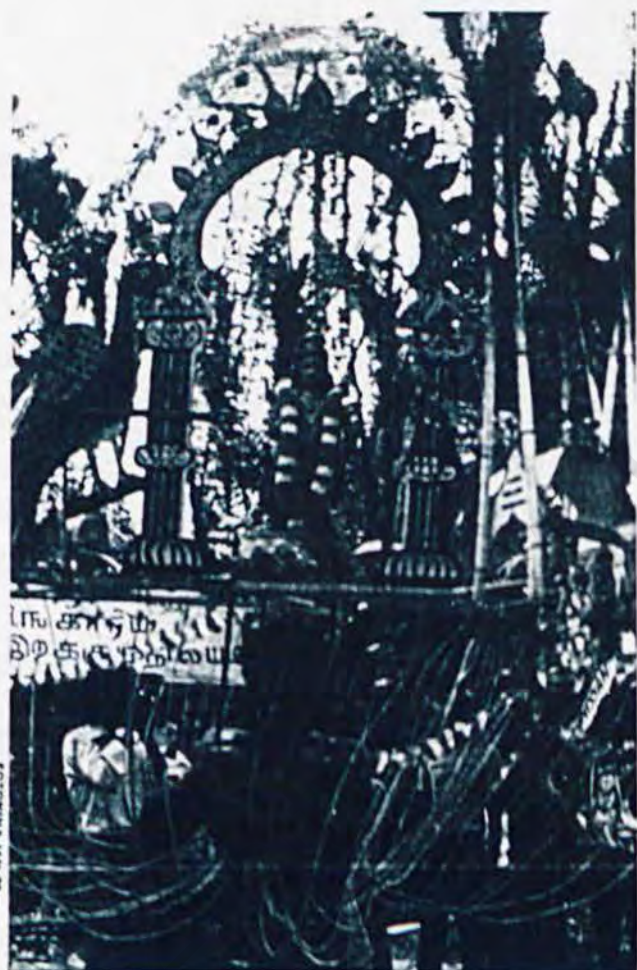


Photo 19: Thaipusam: Kavadi carrier

Vijayathasmi.

Each day of Navarathiri is dedicated to one form of Sakthi.

1st Day	-	Maheswary)	
2nd Day	-	Kaumari)	Durga
3rd Day	-	Varagi)	
4th Day	-	Mahaletchumi)	
5th Day	-	Naishnawi)	Letchumi
6th Day	-	Indrani)	
7th Day	-	Brahmi)	
8th Day	-	Narashimi)	Saraswathy
9th Day	-	Samundi)	
10th Day	-	Vijayathasmi		

A special pūjā is held in honour of Saraswathy, Goddess of knowledge, and school students worship books on this day. Inter-school thirumūrai competitions are held by the Tamil societies to get the students from all over Kuala Lumpur to participate. The author had also involved himself in organising such a function for Sekolah Aminuddin Baki in the Jalan Pasar Vināyagar temple.

3.10.3 Vināyakar Chaturthi

This festival which is the birth day of Lord Gaṇēśha falls on the fourth day after the new moon in the month of Avani. On this day, fasting and keeping vigil throughout the night is common.

Ganēsha temples organise this festival in grand manner in which procession of Ganēsha is done around the surrounding areas, for example the Paranjothy Vināyagar temple in Jalan Ipoh conducts the procession around the Sentul area.

3.10.4 Panguni Uthiram

This festival occurs on the full moon day of the Tamil month of Panguni. In India, it signals the coming of summer. The Thandāyuthabāni temple in Jalan Ipoh is the main venue and they celebrate it annually with a procession to a sacred temple in Maran, Pahang.

The Tamil press also organises a walkathon from Kuala Lumpur to Maran, the runners to finish on the day of the festival in Maran. Just as Batu Caves, Maran will be congested with people from all walks of life.

3.10.5 Deepavali

Deepavali is the national festival for Indians in Malaysia. It occurs in the Tamil month of Aippasi (October-November). A clash in giving the exact dates existed between Sri Maha Mariamman and Malaysian Hindu Sangam, which had been solved in the interest of both parties concerned.

Every temples conduct special pūjās on this day and decoration of oil lamps is quite common since Deepavali happens to be the festival of lights.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF HINDU TEMPLES4.1 Social Significance of Hindu Temples

The Hindu temples plays a very big role for the Indian community in Malaysia. With the existence of about a hundred temples in Kuala Lumpur itself, one cannot deny the fact that these places of worship had indeed become an integral part in the lives of the Malaysian Indians.

The early immigrants from India took the task of building temples to ensure the continuity of their cultural heritage and to relate themselves to the beliefs, customs and traditions of their motherland. The temples, therefore had served its purpose in safeguarding the religious interest of these people.¹

Temples become the centre of activities whenever there are functions or celebrations held. This is one of the few opportunities that Indians take to meet friends, relatives or make new acquaintances by gathering in large numbers in the temples. It should also be noted that the main function of the temples is to provide a sacred place for them to achieve spiritual goals

1. Arasaratnam S., Indians in Malaysia and Singapore (1970), p. 163.

in their respective religious lives.

The temples also function as a setting for Indians to be identified as Hindus by the other religions in Malaysia, namely Islam and Christianity. By involving himself in the various activities provided by the temple, a Hindu is made to realize and become more aware about the social significance of Hindu temples.

In the wake of recent issues regarding the demolition of unregistered by the Government, the temples have become more and more socially associated with the people around them. This might be to enable the temples to get strong moral support to reverse the decision to destroy the temples.

4.2 Social Activities and Services

To remain as the cultural centre and as a place for the gathering of the Indians, the temples, besides their daily pūjās and religious festivals, also embark on organising various events to cater for the people. By taking part in activities organised by the temples, an individual will become more attached to the temple in his realization of the specific roles of the temples as a social institution in helping to create a proper social environment for the Indians to live in.

Culture and religion plays an important part in fostering the continued existence of a race. In recent times, when emphasis is given on usage of Bahasa Malaysia and English as the means of communication, the temples realize the need to

educate the young Indians, especially the children, with basic elements of their own cultural heritage. This is to ensure that these children remember their inherited ways of life when they eventually face the progressive and technologically advanced world.

Most of the Category A temples that the author had visited organises particular cultural and religious events under their various sub-committees. Classes for the traditional Indian dance, "bharata-nāṭṭiyam", are conducted by trained dance teachers. Besides that, the author was informed that the Vināyagar temple in Jalan Pasar, like other Category A temples, organises music classes for the drums and natasvaram. These classes are either held on alternative days or twice a week. This temple also holds a yoga class on every Sundays.

Besides all these classes, temples also undertake the task of teaching religion to the young and old alike. The setting up of bhajan recital and thirumurai (holy song) classes are important tasks taken by the temples which are readily accepted by the public. It is a common thing to see thirumurai singing competition being held in temples. There are also large scale events which are organised by the well established temples like week long religious seminars or conference. The Śrī Kandaswāmy temple took the initiative to hold a conference on Saivism with the help of leading religious intellectuals in the country in July 1983.

Education is a field that is given a lot of emphasis by the temples because of its importance to create individuals with social consciousness. The Maha Muneswarai temple in Lorong Raja Muda had started a kindergarten to educate the children from the General Hospital Government Quarters. Various other temples also undertake similar activities like having Tamil classes or tuition classes for students sitting for SRP or SPM examinations. It should also be alightened that in some temples, teachers (including graduates) render voluntary service to teach the pupils.

The Māriamman temple in Jalan Bandar runs a few Tamil schools in the estates and in the city. One of it, the Appar Tamil Primary School in Jalan Batu, clearly shows the influence exerted by this temple in its aim to open educational opportunities to the public. It also administer a special scholarship fund and loan which are awarded to needy and promising students. The author also knows of a friend who did her dentistry in India under a loan from the temple.

Other events relating to education are also held occasionally like quiz contest, debates and oratory competitions. Although these competitions are held in a small scale, its importance cannot be overlooked.

Another thing that is being checked by the temples are the whereabouts of the youths. In order to deter them from involving in drug addiction and other anti-social activities, sports play a big role in keeping the youths fully occupied.

Sports that are organised by the sports committees of the temples ranges from traditional sports like "sadu-gudu" (played by two teams) to modern sports like badminton, football, athletics and hockey.

Most of the temples are bolstering their image financially by engaging in economic activities. The Mahā Māriamman temple, which was once a shed, was able to expand itself by utilizing its financial resources properly. At present, this temple owns a few buildings and also engage in business. Temples therefore have to find means to be economically involved in order to sustain themselves in the near future.²

One of the services rendered by the temples that plays an important part in the society is marriage. In the Hindu's view, a marriage is not considered very successful if it is not conducted in a temple under the Hindu's elaborate ceremonies and rituals which ends with the tying of the sacred knot or "thali" around the neck of the bride by the bridegroom.

Charges that are fixed for the wedding reception and the rental of the hall for the wedding ceremony varies from one temple to another. The Jalan Pasar Vināyagar temple charges \$745 for all expenses including miscellaneous things, musicians and the service of kurukkal to conduct the wedding. Most of the

2. Stein, Buston, "The Economic Function of a Medieval South Indian Temple", Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 19 (1959/60) p. 167.



FOTOKINA JAN 55

Photo 20: Religious Activities

Singing of Thirumurai and bhajans



REX JAN 55

Photo 21: Cultural Activities

Bharata-nāṭṭiyam

weddings are held in big temples because it has now become a formality for the newly-weds to treat the people present at the marriage to a reception in the premises of the temple itself.

A Category A temple is usually used because it is able to accomodate a few hundred people.

A notable feature in the Category A temples in the establishment of a library within the premises. The Mahā Māriamman and Śrī Kandaswāmy temples have books ranging from simple general knowledge books to highly treasured books about religion and philosophy. Members of the public are allowed to use the library facilities after permission from the management of the temple.*

Religious services performed by all the temples, like the daily pūjās and special pūjās during festivals needs no elaboration. This service also includes horoscope reading (jātakam) when prospective newly-weds seek the help of kurukkals to determine whether they are suitable for one another.

The author also came to know of a unique service that is being carried out by the Śrī Kandaswamy temple in Jalan Scott and the Śrī Mahā Munēswarar temple of Lorong Raja Muda. The former provides crematorium services, regardless of race, for the public in the Jalan Loke Yew cemetery while the latter manages a hearse vehicle under its name. This is quite convenient to the

*Information: Mr. Somaskanda Moorthy, Hon. Secretary of Selangor/ Wilayah Persekutuan Ceylon Saivities Association.

public because this temple is situated just beside the General Hospital. Although the service is not quite profitable, but these two temples still carry on with this social service.

4.3 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 membership and pursuit by tradition of a particular occupation.³

To clearly point out the practice of caste differentiation in temples is quite a difficult task because it is a sensitive issue. In the Malaysian context, there are some changes occurring but nevertheless caste consciousness is still prevalent in their daily lives.

Caste influence is perhaps strongest in temples managed by the Ceylonese or Chettiyārs. Their temple management committee comprises members from the same caste and eventually management will be passed on to important members of that particular caste. This is because their temples which are now big and well-established temples were once founded and built by their respective caste groups and they want to safeguard the importance of their caste

3. Beteille, A., Caste, Class and Power (1965) p. 46.

by handing down the management to their own caste members.

Caste influence in other temples are not quite obvious to trace but a certain aspect of it are being used in getting votes whenever elections for the temple management committees are held. Election candidates often use the caste element to swing the members vote to their favour. This usually leads to uncalled for brawls.

Another aspect of caste practice can be felt when upayams are held in temples. Upayams which are organised and financed by caste organisations are held in temples to unite the members of a certain caste. This is the only occasion where members of a caste can get to know their fellow caste members.

Even at one time, well-established temples in the urban areas refused entry into the temple to the "untouchables" caste members in the 1920's. But eventually this ban was lifted after the Second World War.⁴

4.4 Youth Committees

It was noticed that some of the Category A temples do not have a youth committee to take over the management once the senior members retire. There are some cases whereby due to negligence of the previous owners of the temple, the temple is

⁴. Arasaratnam, S., Ibid., p. 168.

now taken over by the youths who organise various festivals and activities. The youths in Jalan Loke Yew manages the Munēswārār temple and celebrates the important festivals whereas the youths in Jalan Cheras had taken over the Munēswārār temple and are now using its premises as a tuition class.

A sad case to note is the situation that exist now whereby youths are only sought after by the management to render voluntary manual service. Whenever an important festival approaches, these youths will be seen decorating the outer areas of the temple, going house-to-house for donations and other tasks which needs physical strength. These type of occurrences are quite familiar with Category B temples where a lot of Indians live near the temple. The Category A temples, with their financial stability, either employs outside workers or use the services of their own employed workers.

4.5 Role of Malaysia Hindu Sangam

The Malaysia Hindu Sangam was formed in 1965 mainly to co-ordinate the religious activities of the various temples and Hindu organisations in the country. It also functions as the national representative body of the Hindu community in Malaysia.

The Sangam therefore represents the Hindus in all matters relating to the Government and to other religions. It also undertakes the responsibility to safeguard the religious freedom of the Hindus, whether in the form of individuals,

institutions or temples. In order to make this task easier, the Sangam has councils set up by its affiliates at district, state and national levels.

The Sangam also works in close relations with the various temples to propagate the religion and to carry out reforms that affects the Hindus on the whole. A decision was taken quite some years back by the Sangam to try to prevent certain religious practices from being done during religious functions. Their appeal to shorten the length of skewers on a kavadi carrier and the sacrifice of animals within the temple compound was successful enough to reduce the number of such religious practices.

With regard to the shortage of Brāhmin kurukkals in Malaysia, the Sangam suggested to build a institute for Hindu studies whereby youths can be groomed into priesthood and be taught classical music and dances. Although this plan never became a reality, the Sangam still assists in matters regarding sculptors and Brāhmin kurukkals. The Sangam gets into a close rapport with Government bodies like the Immigration Department and the Foreign Affairs Ministry to enable sculptors and priests from India to perform to their hereditary occupation during special functions like the building of temples and kumbabishegam.

The Sangam, in realising the importance of thirumurais or holy songs in uplifting the spiritual thinking of the Hindus, organises this singing competition on a grand basis annually. The competition, divided into age-groups, is held in stages,

starting from district to state level and eventually to the national level. This competition is usually held in the Category A temples in the urban areas.

The Sangam also sponsors national seminars regarding religious matters that discusses various problems that are being faced by the Hindus. Besides that, international conferences are also held with delegates coming from India, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Nepal, Indonesia, Mauritius and the United States of America.

In spite of their responsibilities to the Hindu community, there was a difference in opinion between the Sri Maha Mariamman Devasthanam in Jalan Bandar and the Sangam regarding the naming of the date for Deepavali. This problem has been solved somehow, but the strain between the two bodies can still be felt.

The Sangam's reputation is also well known and is given due respect for their services to the Malaysian Hindus. This can be seen with the appointment of the Sangam's president, Dr. S.M. Ponniah as the Vice-President of the World Hindu Organisation based in Katmandu, Nepal.

Most of the services rendered by the Sangam met with failures, mainly because of lack of participation from the youths and also the disability of the Sangam to acquire the help of the Category B and C temples. This is because the temples like to remain as individual bodies without much disturbance from other bodies.

4.6 Saiva Siddhanta Mandram

The Saiva Siddhanta Mandram is perhaps the youngest of Hindu Organisations in this country, which is playing a very active and vital role in the promotion and dissemination of Hinduism, particularly among those who do not have a basic education in Tamil language.

The Mandram, which is situated in Sangeetha Abivirthi Sabha of Brickfields, was first initiated through the efforts of Mr. Thiruvagasam (the present Secretary) who corresponded with the Saiva Siddhanta Church in Hawaii. He did an individual missionary work and when 35 American Hindus came to Malaysia in 1980, the idea of forming a Mandram became a reality. Youths came together and a pro-term committee of six members was elected in August 1981. The Mandram was officially registered in July 1982.

The Mandram is managed by a fifteen member committee* which are elected yearly. There are three sections, which are the Economic Section which deals in financial and fund-raising matters and comprises six members. The Council of Teachers, have five qualified persons⁺ to teach Hinduism locally and is expected to expand. The third section, the Saivite Women's

*The committee consist evenly of employees of Government and private sectors.

⁺The teachers had to pass the San Marga Master Course on Hinduism.

Section with ten members looks into matters that affects the Hindu women. At present there are 190 members of the Mandram. Through the efforts of the Mandram, fifteen centres were set up in all parts of Malaysia to give religious guidance to the people.

Among the various services rendered by the Mandram to its members and the public is the San Marga Master Course and Hinduism which is usually conducted by learned disciples of Saivism from Hawaii. It is conducted in English. The author had the privilege of attending such a course in July 1984 which was an intensive course about Hinduism.

The Mandram also runs other services such as the maintenance of a religious library, counselling on religious matters, social services in estates, tamil classes and thevaran classes once a week, cookery classes for women, copper toolings depicting God and religious symbols as well as religious books for sale.

A lot of Saivite magazines, periodicals and articles can be read within the Mandram's premises. A point to note is that most of these functions are held in the nearby Sri Kandaswamy temple, to reflect its close association with the temple. Another common sight nowadays in the Category A temples whenever there is a celebration, is the presence of the Mandram members, selling religious books to the devotees.

4.7 Role of Hindu Youth Organisations

The needs and wishes of the Hindu youths, be it in the field of religion, economy, agriculture, education, leadership or even physical, has to supercede the needs of others. With this view in mind, the first Hindu Youth Movement was opened in 1949.

Since its inception, the Hindu Youth Organisation had strived to be a well established and responsible body. In its efforts to help in the development and solidarity of the society, the Organisation had changed image of being urban based into an organisation that also involves itself with the rural society.

The Malaysian Hindu Youth Council (MHYC) which is the parent body of Hindu Youth Organisations (HYO) is divided into various level which are the state and district levels. At present, there are 164 organisations including Sabah and Sarawak with about 46,000 members. It also has the largest membership among the affiliates of the Malaysia Hindu Sangam.

HYO's which don't have their own premises, make use of the facilities provided by a nearby temple to chart out their activities. At the same time, they also function as the Youth Committee of the temple, helping out whenever there is a festival or religious event held in the temple. The Pasar/Imbi HYO had made use of the Jalan Pasar Vināyagar temple until they would acquire a premise of their own.

Among the objectives of HYO is to promote and provide

opportunities for the study and practice of Hindu Religion and Philosophy. The HYO's organise religious classes, talks and prayer sessions in temples for the public. Other activities carried out includes organising classes in the singing of thevaram and observing most of the Hindu festivals.

The Organisation also promotes goodwill and understanding among the various youths in the country. This is done by organising national convention which involves all the organisations in the country. The author, in attending the 19th national convention of the Malaysian Hindu Youth Organisation in Penang in 1983, was able to participate in a lot of activities ranging from religious to cultural, social, sports and literary.

The Organisation also carry out various kinds of sporting activities to keep the youths in a healthy state of mind. Cultural traditions and social activities are held to instil awareness among the youths. Leadership is also stressed by having forums, training camps, seminars, and workshops in order to forge responsible leaders in a developing society. Members are also given help in carrying out economic, business and agricultural projects in order to raise the living standards of youths.

Despite all the commitments undertaken by the Organisation, a grief concern was voiced out by its patron, Datuk S. Samy Vellu over the disunity and lack of guidance between Hindu organisations. The setting up of co-ordinating body, which brings together various temples authorities, the Hindu Youth

Council and other Hindu organisations, was suggested. Among its objectives should be to establish state councils on Hinduism, act as a liaison body with the Government on matters pertaining to the Hindu religion and help in the fixing of dates for Hindu religious occasions.⁵

The chairman of this body, was suggested to be selected periodically from the more established temples. Although these suggestion haven't materialised yet, but steps have been taken by the Organisation to be more efficient in its undertakings.

4.8 Political Significance of Temples

Any religious matters or affairs of the temple 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 some of the temples will clearly reveal the influence exerted by politics on temples.

Notable politicians in the Cabinet had once held posts in management of temples, mainly in the Śrī Maha Mariamman temple. This temple which is a very influential institution, can be 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.

5. The Star, 22.4.1983, p. 7.

The author also came across some of the committee members of temples who are holding important posts in Malaysian Indian Congress party (M.I.C.) at branch and state levels. This is mainly because the temple is the center of activity in a specified area and its management committee are well-known to the public in terms of leadership and responsibility. With so much assets in their favour, these people could easily get support from the community.

Individuals holding dual positions in temple committees and political parties will eventually confuse themselves with their roles. Both their roles will influence and be influenced by one another whenever they make a decision. So it can be seen that most of the religious decisions are slightly inclined politically.

Besides being a place of religious and social importance, temples have indirectly changed to a more political outlook. Individuals who had built the temple themselves also pursue their political ambitions as a personal interest. The problem comes when they had achieved their political aim, they neglect the temple which is then left deserted.

4.9 Central Administration of Temples

Even though the author had accounted for a total of a hundred temples, it is quite surprising to see all of them coming under the central administration of a particular temple. There

was a suggestion that the Sri Mahā Māriamman temple in Jalan Bandar because of its popularity and size, take charge of all the temples.

Perhaps one of the reason why this suggestion was not heeded is that the temples like to remain as isolated organisations. They prefer to manage their own affairs for their own locality. Any disturbance caused by the parent temple, if centralisation takes place, will only tend to jeopardize the interests and roles of the temples.

The fact that there is no centralisation of administration shows a picture of the temples as unorganised religious bodies but it is not in any ways, disorganised. Centralising all the temples is a arduos task and it involves cooperation from all the temples in order to achieve it.

Furthermore centralisation will restrict the activities of the temples concerned. There will rise a situation whereby the temples have to consult the central administration first before proceeding to carry out any function.

4.10 Role of M.I.C. in the Temples

Some of the temples in Kuala Lumpur are now in a bad state, waiting just to be demolished, especially the unregistered temples. This is because the Government has proposed to the forming up of the Kuala Lumpur Master Plan whereby a modern outlook of it will be shown.

The problem comes when temples that are built on Government's land had to make way for the development of the city. The MIC therefore had to interfere politically to safeguard the interest of the Hindu community. The MIC has set up a body to look into this matter by getting a full census about temples found in Kuala Lumpur.

A meeting of all the temple committee members in Kuala Lumpur was organised by the MIC in May 1984 to discuss possible ways to save the unregistered temples on Government land. It was decided that a full data about all the temples will be sent to the Datuk Bandar to allocate places for temples in the Master Plan.

Any temple, before being demolished, had to be informed first to the MIC. This is because some of the temples were demolished without any notice. This problem is a new one which must be solved by the MIC and the various temple authorities to justify their existence for the importance of the Hindu community.



FOTOKINA JAN 88

Photo 22: Social Aspect

Feast in temple during a festival



FOTOKINA JAN 88

Photo 23: Social Aspect

Wedding in a temple according to Hindu Āgamas

CONCLUSION

5.1 Problems faced by the Hindu Temples

The author, after doing fieldwork and observing the various temples in Kuala Lumpur for the duration of six months, was in a better position to cite some of the problems that are being faced by the Hindu temples in Malaysia generally and in Kuala Lumpur specifically.

Although the existing problems are quite inter-related, that is religious, social, cultural economic and political, it should be overcome in the coming years because it poses a major threat to the future of the Hindu temples. The author in his capacity, have also given some suggestions which may or may not be followed to solve the problems of the temple.

The main problem being faced by the temples is the increase in the number of temples which are built by individuals. The reason why individuals still persist in building temples, when there are more than enough temples to cater for the Hindu community, can be attributed to their social backgrounds. Indians who migrated to Malaysia from India had different religion, language, culture, custom, ethnicity and traditions.

With regard to all these differences, it was obvious to see ethnic groups like the Ceylonese and the Chettiyars building temples dedicated to Gaṇeśha and Subrahmanya respectively. This

was to enable them to safeguard the interests of their own sub-groups. Those who are lower in their social strata, like the labourers, build small temples which are dedicated to Munēswarar and Muniāndy. These people are separated from the elite class in the main urban areas and differs in all aspects of life from the Ceylonese or Chettiyārs. In order to feel more at home, they build separate temples so that members of their own sub-ethnic can intermingle among themselves in a more familiar social atmosphere.

This type of incidence clearly shows the existence of caste differentiation until today. Even if a specific person denies that there exist caste influence, as far as temple matters are concerned, but the persistence of this social evil can be clearly seen by the sub-division of temples according to sub-ethnics.

A common occurrence that leads to individuals building temples on their own is the problem that arises among the temple management committee members. A enthusiastic member who wants to improve the condition of the temple may earn the wrath of the other members. This leads to internal conflict among the members who wants to seige the power of managing the temple. This may be due to the segregation of the committee members according to their various sub ethnics and this makes it difficult for them to see eye to eye regarding some important matters. A common

example is that some members do not want the temples to be commercialise and want it only to conduct religious activities without any yearning to make a profit.

Most of the temples do not emphasize much on the school of thoughts. There seems to be no clear or definite way to outline the practise of Saivism and Vaishnavism. This being the case, it is not surprising to see Vaishnavites going to Saivite temples and vice versa. There are also temples dedicated to Visnu which are managed by Saivites like the Veera Hammar temple (Category B) in Brickfields. Some of the temples and organisations in an attempt to solve this problem, had, brought Saivite missionaries from overseas to help clarify and teach Hinduism. Although this move is an applaudable one, it is should also be noted that the foreign missionaries do not know the local peoples' background and it is difficult to express their actual views in a multi religious society.

Youths, who form the backbone of the future temple management committees, are often caught unaware of the things happening in the temples. To them, Hinduism is a very complicated and complex religion. Therefore if efforts to enlighten them about Hinduism clearly is not carried out, we will find them drifting to other religions such as Islam and Christianity. This can be seen by the moderate number of conversion by the Hindus every year.

There is also a certain amount of political exploitation done by the M.I.C. on the temples to assert its influence as the national representative body of the Indians. A typical example was seen during the process of collecting funds by the M.I.C. to buy the Vanto Academy in Petaling Jaya. The M.I.C. in realising that the 'Sri Maha Mariamman temple have surplus money which can be channelled usefully into the social community service, appealed to the temple authorities to help in acquiring the Academy.

When the temple authorities refused to answer the appeal, the M.I.C. countered back by informing the temple that they will not officiate in Batu Caves during the Thaipusam festival. The temple, finally, had to donate a token sum of money for the course. The M.I.C. should also indulge in fighting for more public holidays during Hindu festivals. It has been bidding unsuccessfully to declare Thaipusam as a public holiday in the Federal Territory for more than ten years.

There is no party as far as temples are concerned to protect the interest of the temples and the society. The location of temples on Government land makes it vulnerable to demolition if the land is required in the name of development. This sad foresight is what that is being feared now. Knowing that the temples will be demolished in the near future, some temple authorities do not attempt to improve the condition of their temples. The M.I.C. can use its power as the component party of Barisan Nasional to acquire land from the Federal or State Government

regarding this matter.

An important aspect that most of the temples lack is a steady financial position to enable it to carry out its activities. Not many temples are rich and there should be an allocation of funds to these temples by the government. The Akta Perlembagaan Malaysia 1957 clearly states that Islam is the major religion in this country but it also mentions that it will not deter or stop belief in other religions. Under this phrase, the Government can contribute by giving grants or financial aid to the temples. If one were to look at the temple census, one can discover that only a minimal number of temples received aids from the government to build temples.

There is also no existence of a religious foundation that also functions as the parent body for all the temples. No doubt the Malaysia Hindu Sangam had been the national representative body for the Hindu community but a question which one should ponder is whether the Hindu community or Hindu temples accept the Sangam as the parent body to represent them.

The absence of this parent body to coordinate temple matters is clearly reflected in the various disorders in which things are carried out in the temples. There is no system of practices being done. Even though every temple perform pūjās, but the times varies according to temples. There is also no fixed procedure in the case of festivals that are celebrated in the temples.

So a situation arises whereby people do not know the proper set of rules on certain things that are carried out by the temples. People who go to the temples do not quite understand the procedures that should be followed and also its meanings. People only tend to go to temples more to bargain with God for something they want or for the purpose of social interaction rather than due to religious inclination. There are certainly a lot of misconceptions and misunderstanding that are created out of the state of the temples.

The author also observed a tendency among some of the kurukkals to be tempted more towards materialism than to their religious duty. On many occasions, these kurukkals were found not doing their job properly. When a devotee ask the kurukkal to perform an arccanai on behalf of him, he is usually charged \$1/- for a coconut archanai or 50 cents for a fruit archanai. The problem arises when the devotee, usually the rich ones, pays extra for the kurukkal's keeps so that he will recite the Sanskritic mantras in a very elaborate and good way which might take quite some time. But if the devotees does not offer anything extra, the length of the mantras are cut short drastically. If people look at the kurukkals conduct, then they will be annoyed and will prefer not to come to the temple, thus depriving the temple of public support.

There is also no coordination between people who are knowledgeable in religious matter, especially those who have a good command of the Tamil language with government servants especially administrators and accountants in running the temple management committee. Poor management of temples are due to individuals who are illiterate or do not have an English education lack the expertise to administer the temples and to keep check on the accounts of the temples. A lot of malpractice, involving money, therefore is a common occurrence. At the same time, individuals who are English educated run away from involving themselves in temple management because they lack the fundamental knowledge about religion and the Tamil language. These individuals, who have the capability to maintain the temple's accounting books, therefore create a vacuum that is filled up by other individuals with a mind to swindle some of the money for their own personal interest.

In its attempt to improve its position, most of the temples have inclined more towards the commercial aspect, thus ignoring their religious importance. The issue of receipts for every arccanai clearly shows the economic interest of the temples. Even though the funds collected from arccanai, wedding ceremonies and public donations are more than enough to cover the expenses, nevertheless it is felt that these funds are not utilised in the proper way. These funds are wasted unnecessarily in beautifying

the temples whereas it can be beneficial to the society if the funds are channelled towards the upliftment of the community. Some temples are also being run as "family affair" whereby management or leadership is passed down to their own family members. It is also puzzling to note that some temples do not let the public to read their accounts statements when the public are the one who were responsible in donating money to the temple.

The role of temples as an education centre for the spiritual development of the community is quite restricted because the management of the temples are too class-orientated. It has also failed in some aspects to preserve Indian culture because only some temples organises talks or bharata natyam after pūjās. The people therefore are bound to be ignorant and follow blindly whatever that takes place in the temples.

5.2 Suggestions to overcome the Problems

In order to do away with all the current disorders being done in temples, what the Hindus should do is to form an unification of all the temples. This central body can only be formed if temple management committees dissolve their political conflict and set their target to achieve unity among the temples.

This body must represent the voices of Hindus in all religious matters and of utmost importance is that it should be

accepted by Hindus themselves and by all the other communities. It must also get due certification from all the schools of thoughts like Saivism, Vaishnavism and also governing bodies of other religions.

To be more effective, this body must be registered under the National Unity Board in the Prime Minister's Department. In this way it can coordinate the smooth running of all the temples but it also let temples have the freedom to manage themselves individually by following a set of rules (regarding pūjās, festivals and ceremonies) that is standardized by the main governing body itself.

The body should make sure that temples are functioning to provide a good religious, educational and cultural understanding to the people. Failure to do so by the temples can be questioned by the central body by asking for "show cause" letters.

There should be total revival of Hinduism in this country. Hinduism should be made relevant to life and make Hindus proud of themselves as followers of the religion. The main scriptures and holy texts of Hinduism must be translated from Sanskrit into the Tamil, English and the Malay language so that the multi-racial society can clearly understand the teachings of Hinduism.

The gist and core of Hinduism must be taught by local missionaries who were trained in Malaysia itself. A view that many Hindus will agree to is that devotees must know what the

kurukkal recites in his mantrams because it is in Sanskrit. This is because one may not necessarily know what the kurukkal is chanting during pūjās and wedding ceremonies. Although mantrams can be still recited in Sanskrit, but every verse should be translated.

There should also be an urgent need for the revival of temples. People should know the role of the temples. Temples should try to play their major roles as the place of worship, place of preserving culture, educational centre and social community centre. Under the social community service, the well-established temples can answer the needs of old folks or the disabled people. Fine arts, sculpture, traditional music and dance can be preserved by performing them whenever a festival is celebrated.

In order to solve the problems, one should also reach into the grassroot level. Primary students who are of Indian origin can be taught Tamil or something about basic Hinduism during their P.O.L. classes. At present, they are taught civics lessons or are just left free to themselves whereas the Muslim students are taught somethings about Islam. The Education Ministry, can install such a move in a trial basis by training teachers in training colleges who must take Hinduism as a compulsory subject. The Ministry should realize the importance of encouraging other religions because it only unites the multi-racial society. A verse from Rig Veda, "only One exist, but wise men call Him in many ways", should be heeded.

5.3 Conclusion

At the present, the temples are not playing the central role in the society. There is an urgent need to revive the various religious organisations and institution. Then only can Hinduism as well as the temples flourish and be part and parcel of the Malaysian identity.

If the temples does not make any attempt to rectify the present situation, the author fears that intellectuals will slowly sway from the religion and people may start questioning the existence of the temples itself. This will directly lead to the slow death of the temples as the major religious, cultural, educational and communal service centre.

Anbe Sivamayam Satyame Parasivam

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