

M. RAMALINGAM

KATARAGAMA

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BY

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COLOMBO.

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PREFACE.

This is an article contributed by me to the "Hindu Organ," Jaffna, in 1935. At the request of several of my friends, it is reprinted in the present form, with a few modifications and additions, as the Hindus are now evincing an interest in the proper administration of the temple funds.

The proceeds of sale of this pamphlet, which is priced at ten cents will be wholly devoted to one of the charitable works now being carried out for the convenience of the Kataragama pilgrims.

C. RASANAYAGAM.

Colombo,
5th March, 1938.

KATARAGAMA

A HISTORICAL SKETCH

BY MUDALIYAR C. RASANAYAGAM, J.P.

THE time when the dry and barren village of Kataragama became sacred to the worship of Muruga Kadavul (முருகக் கடவுள்) is hidden in the mists of antiquity. It has been the scene of annually recurring pilgrimage of the devotees of Murugan from time immemorial. The growth of pilgrim traffic in spite of pestilence, water famine and irksome travel has been phenomenal. The time and cause of its becoming a place of worship are legendary. These legends are contained in the ancient Tamil works of the third Sangam, in the Sanskrit Skanda Purana of the 5th century A. D. and in the Tamil Kandapurānam of the 13th century A. D. The latter blends the Northern and Southern traditions so well that it is almost impossible for the reader to eliminate the myths from history and to enquire whether the deified hero was of northern or of southern origin.

Of about 38 names given by the Nighandus as those of Muruga Kadavul some are purely Tamil and the rest Sanskritic. The Sanskrit names are mostly connected with certain legends and the Tamil names are abstract or causal. Whatever may be the truth or otherwise of the Puranic legends and myths

which led to the birth of Kartikeya or Shanmuga, and to the commission issued to him by his Sire, Lord Siva, to destroy Suran, the Yakkha King of Ceylon, who was persecuting and tyrannising the Devas and the celestials, a connected history and the cause of ever-rising popularity of Kataragama should be deduced from whatever information is available in ancient Tamil literature.

Encamped at Kataragama.

It is said in Nakkirar's (நக்கிரர்) commentary to Irayanar Ahapporul (இறையனார் அகப்பொருள்) which gives a full account of the three Tamil Sangams—Nakkirar himself having been a member of the third Sangam—that “திரிபுரமெரித்த விரிசடைக் கடவுளும் குன்றெறிந்த முருகவேளும்” were, several millenniums ago, presidents of the first Tamil Sangam, one after the other, even before Agaththiyar, known as the father of Tamil literature. It is not necessary now to prove that the Muruga Kadavul who presided at the first Sangam was the same as the slayer of Suran, as there is plenty of evidence in Tamil literature. Ceylon and its Yakkha capital Mahendra was adjacent to the Tamil country with its capital Madura, where the first Sangam was established. The cause of war must have been the persecution and tyranny practised by Suran over his neighbours, the Tamils, although the Puranas would have it that the persecuted people were celestials.

Murugan after his victory, encamped at Kataragama, fell in love with Valli, the daughter of a prince, the chief of a Tamil Kurinchi tribe, and married her. The reason for his encampment at Kataragama was, perhaps, to be in the midst of a friendly Tamil tribe, and not among a Yakkha tribe, his enemies who occupied the other parts of Ceylon.

Ravana was another Yakkha king who ruled over Lanka long after Suran. The Rama Ravana war is surmised to have taken place about 5400 B. C., following a traditional statement in the Rajavali that a large portion of the kingdom of Ravana was engulfed by the sea in 2347 B. C.

During the Rama Ravana period, Kavadapuram was the capital of the Pandyas and the home of the 2nd Tamil Sangam. It was established after the destruction of Madura, their first capital and the home of the first Tamil Sangam. Therefore, the time of Suran and that of Muruga Kadavul of the first Sangam period must have been at least 2 or 3 millenniums earlier than the Ravana period, or 6000 or 7000 B. C.

Popular God of the Tamils.

Later, when Murugan was deified more than 5000 years before Christ, for his glorious deeds of valour, he became the most popular God of the Tamil land, particularly of the Kurinchi tribes, and was made their tutelary God. He was first and foremost worshipped at Kataragama where he had encamped and married. Thus he obtained the name of Katirgaman. His worship became so popular within a short time that it even extended to the North of India. He was then equated with Kartikeya, Shanmuga, Saravanabhava &c, Sanskrit names, for the origin of which legends of a very convincing nature do now exist. His image appeared in the coins of King Huvishka of North-West India of the 2nd century A. D; Kalidasa, the great Sanskrit poet of the 3rd century A. D. composed a poem called Kumara Sambhava in his honour; and he is alluded to in another of Kalidasa's work called Megha Dhuta, and in the dramatic poem 'Mrichha katika' of king Shudraka of the same period. In spite of all

the legendary embellishments given by the Sanskritists regarding his birth &c, his worship has almost disappeared in North India, but he is venerated with great esteem where the Tamil race predominates. He is the Guardian Deity of the Tamil race, their language, their literature, and no village is found in the Tamil land without a shrine dedicated to His worship.

The Tamil Kurinchi tribe who sponsored the worship of Muruga Kadavul at Kataragama was later called Vedar or Veddhas, an appellation given to all tribes who lived by hunting. The jungle Veddhas still boast of royal descent and think that the King of England is their 'hura' (மஹாராஜா). It is specially to be noted that the members of this Veddah tribe, who claim relationship with the God himself, are still the priests of the temple at Kataragama, and they carry on priestly duties of offering rice cooked with deer flesh, foreign to Hindu worship, but a proto-Hindu practice.

The Building.

The worship continued for many centuries at the summit of the hill lying close to the village of Kataragama under the aegis of the Kurinchi Chieftains of Kataragama, and one of them was the Chief Noble who attended the ceremony of planting the Bo-tree brought from India during the time of Dewanampiya Tissa about 240 B. C. One of the 8 plants that sprouted from the first fruit of that tree is said to have been planted at Kataragama. (Mahavansa, chap: xix).

About 101 B. C. King Dutugemunu, in fulfilment of a vow, built the temple at Kataragama for Kanda Kumara, probably at the site where the present temple stands. It is also said in the Yalpana Vaipava Malai that Wijeya himself, at about 500 B.C. built a shrine for Kadirai Andavar, perhaps on the hill.

In the first century A. D., a poem in praise of God Murugan (திருமுருகாற்றுப்படை) was composed by Nakkirar, a member of the third Sangam. Although several shrines in South India are mentioned by name in the poem, Kataragama is not mentioned, but is supposed to be included in பழமுதிர்சோலை or in குன்றுதோறூடல்.

Between the 2nd and the 11th centuries, nothing is known regarding the vicissitudes of Kataragama. During the Chola occupation of Ceylon between the 10th and 11th centuries, when the Sinhalese princes had fled to Ruhuna and were in hiding, a General named Loka abode at Kataragama, and after his death one Kassappa or Kesadhatu resided there for 6 months. During that time, it is said, that he defeated a Chola army that came against him. He in turn was defeated and killed by a prince named Kitti who thus became the Governor of Ruhuna (Mahav: ch: 57.) It was he who assumed the name of Vijaya Bahu and reigned at Polannaruwa after the evacuation of the Cholas. A large quantity of broken bricks and tiles, strewn about above the right bank of the Menik Ganga at another holy spot called Sinna Katirgamam, a few miles from Kataragama, indicates the site where Loka and Kesadhatu resided. It was also probably during those troublous times, when the Sinhalese princes were holding sway in the Ruhuna district, that the Veddah princes lost their royal state and became identified with the common people.

A BUDDHIST VIHARA

A Buddhist king of the 12th century A. D. built a Vihara and Monastery within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of the Hindu temple, but the Veddhas and other inhabitants in the vicinity, being Hindus, the Vihara lapsed into decay within a short time.

PILGRIMS.

According to ancient traditions, though not mentioned in the Ramayana, Hanuman worshipped at Kataragama, when he came to Ceylon in search of Sita Devi, the wife of Rama, captured and carried away to Ceylon by the Yakkha king Ravana.

Although it is well known that the Indians from the remotest parts went on pilgrimage to Kataragama, the earliest case reported in Tamil literature is that of Pughalendi Pulavar, who, with the help rendered by the king of Jaffna, made a successful pilgrimage to Kataragama about the early part of the 13th century.

In the 16th century, the Portuguese, with a view of acquiring wealth by plunder rather than in a state of religious frenzy, destroyed the Hindu temples in the Coast country and attempted to sack the temple at Kataragama which was reputed to contain untold wealth. Finding only a humble hut in the village used as a temple, they believed that the wealth was stored in the summit of the sacred hill. After three attempts in vain to climb the hill, and after beheading three Kapuralas who failed to point out the proper route, they returned crestfallen, attributing their failure to the machinations of the devil dwelling there.

During the Portuguese and the Dutch times all pilgrimages to Kataragama were conducted through Jaffna and Kandy or through Jaffna and Batticaloa. Having heard that great crowds of yogis and fakirs were going to Kandy through Jaffna, and suspecting that they were soldiers in disguise proceeding to swell the forces of the king of Kandy, the

Portuguese authorities prevailed upon their protege, Edir-mannasinga Pararajasekaran who reigned at Jaffna about 1600 A. D. to stop such pilgrimage, and nearly 300 of them were sent back to India.

A KASHMIR PILGRIM'S EXPERIENCE

During these troublous times, the most pious and the most adventurous only among the Hindus dared to make their pilgrimage to Kataragama, and one of them was Kalyana Natha or Kalyanagiri, a brahmin of Kashmir, who came with the intention of persuading the God Kanda to desert Katara-gama and go to Kashmir. During his sojourn of 12 years, finding that persuasion by prayers, and practice of austerities was of no avail, he made a gold Yantra in which, by spells and incantations, he imprisoned the spiritual essence of the God and packed it in a box to be removed with him to India. When all was ready, a Veddah girl who was his servant, taking advantage of his momentary absence, picked up the box in which the Yantra was packed, ran away with it and entering the temple disappeared. Kalyana Natha raced after the girl into the temple and stood awe-struck when the God and his wife Valli appeared before him. The old sage fell prostrate at his feet and begged of the God to grant his desire and accompany him to India. But the goddess appealed to the sage not to part her Lord from her and to grant her மங்களியப்பிச்சை. The old sage found himself in a quandary, and ultimately not only consented to leave the Yantra behind but also decided to settle down at Kataragama, where after many years he attained Samathi. It is he who is now worshipped under the name of Muttulinga Swami, and his residence is called Kalyana Madam. This was the story told me by Kesapuri Swami alias Palkudi Bawa whom I knew very well during the years 1896 and 1897.

He passed away in 1898 at a ripe old age. But the version given by Sir P. Arunachalam is slightly different.

The King of Kandy who heard of this miracle helped the Swami to build the present temple which has no architectural pretensions of any kind. The Yantra made by Kalyanagiri is now the object of veneration there. An image of stone or metal which existed previously was hidden in the jungle during the Uva rebellion of 1817 and has since disappeared. The king of Kandy who had the present temple erected is traditionally known as Raja Sinha and Sir P. Arunachalam identified him as Raja Sinha II of 1634 A. D. His identification appears to be correct, as Jayasingiri Swami, one in the line of Kalyanagiri's disciples and not his disciple, as incorrectly supposed by Sir P. Arunachalam, met Governor Brownrigg and Dr. Davy who visited the place in 1819 A. D, and told them that some of the successors of Kalyanagiri had already attained Samathi on the seat left by the Swami and he would be the next.

DESCRIPTION

A few extracts are now quoted from the writings of Rebeiro, Knox and others, which will afford a better description of the place than any words of mine can, as the books in which they are contained are not easily accessible to every reader who is interested in Kataragama.

Ribeiro's Ceilao (Ceylon) ; Translated by Dr. Paul E. Pieris, C. C. S.

"Four leagues inland from this spot (the old kingdom of Yala) there is a pagoda held in great reverence by the Gentiles; here are preserved the offerings which had been made for many years, consisting of gold, jewels, and precious stones, and five hundred armed men are always maintained for its defence. We have several times made inquiries about it in our

desire to obtain this wealth and to relieve them of their anxiety regarding it. In the beginning of 1642, I was one of a company of one hundred and fifty Portuguese and two thousand Lascarins, the majority of whom were Christians, under the command of Gaspar Figueira de Cerpe who was a man held in high respect among us, a man of ability and well versed in their language and customs; when we came near the spot where they said the pagoda stood, we took a native residing close to the spot and our Commander inquired from him if he knew where the pagoda was. He replied that he did, and that it was close by; he acted as our guide and led us through a hill covered with forest which was the only one in that district, and this we wandered round and recrossed many times. It was certain that the pagoda was at the top of it, but I do not know what magic it possessed for out of the five guides whom we took, the first three were put to death because we thought that they were deceiving us, for they acted as if they were mad and spoke all kinds of nonsense, each one on his turn, without the one knowing of the others. The last two deceived us and did exactly the same, and we were forced to turn back the way we had come without effecting any thing and without even seeing the pagoda which is called Catergao."

2. "*Portuguese Era*" by Dr. P. E. Pieris, Vol. I, page 324.

"Not far off, buried in the depths of the fever haunted forest, was the dewale of the terrible war-god of Kataragama, claiming an antiquity more remote than the Sinhalese race itself. Exaggerated rumours of the immense wealth of gold and gems which were stored therein roused the cupidity of the Portuguese (in 1597), but some secret power appeared to shield the mystic spot, and in spite of all their efforts no hostile expedition ever crossed its sacred threshold."

3. *Knox who was a captive in the Court of Kandy for many years, in the account of his captivity in Ceylon.*

"It (the salt lewaya of Hambantota) is very sickly, which they do impute to the power of a great God, who dwelleth near by, in a town they call Cotteragon standing in the road, to whom all that go to fetch salt, both small and great, must give an offering. The name and power of this God striketh such terror into the Chingulays that those who are otherwise enemies to this king, and have served both Portuguese and Dutch against him, yet would never assist either to make invasions this way."

4. *Dr. Daoy who accompanied Governor Brownrigg to Kataragama in 1819, in his 'Accounts of Ceylon' published in 1821.*

"Boodhoo, is not alone worshipped by the Sinhalese; the gods, guardians of the Island and of the national religion, are worshipped also; as Nata, Visnu, Katragam, Samen, Pittia and the goddess Patine. Whilst the people address themselves to Boodhoo for favour in another state of existence. for advancement in the next life, or for final happiness, they beseech these gods to confer on them immediate blessings or to remove or ward off present misfortunes or dangers. Knowing the influence and impression of the pressing calls of the moment, and the little thought that most men take of the distant, and uncertain future, one cannot be astonished that these gods of the day, though less respected than Boodhoo, or even his priests, should be more feared and more zealously worshipped. The Kappurallas, the priests of Dewales are not particularly respected as such: they are not educated for their office, or regularly ordained; no qualification worth noticing being necessary on their part, with the exception of caste and the observance of a certain mode of life considered essential to purity. The priests of Katragam should be Brahmens, and of the other gods either

Goewanse or Pattea-people. Of all the gods, the Kattragam god is most feared: his temple in the eastern part of the Island is resorted to by pilgrims, not only from all parts of Ceylon, but from many parts of the continent of India; and, such is the dread entertained of this being, that I was never able to induce a native artist to draw a figure of him. Besides his common name, derived from the village where his principal temple is, this god has a thousand others; and it is a privilege of all of them to have a variety of names, the numbers being generally proportionable to the rank or estimation in which the individual is held.

The combination of the worship of Boodhoo and of the gods, is a curious feature in the history of the religion of Ceylon, and, particularly, as it may be considered not merely tolerated, but quite orthodox; accordingly, it is not uncommon to see a Dewale and a Vihare contiguous, or even under the same roof."

"Besides the temple of the Kataragam God, there are many others, all of them small and mean buildings within two adjoining enclosures. In the largest square are the Kataragam Dewale, and the Dewale of his brother Ganna; a wihare dedicated to Boodhoo, in a state of great neglect, and a fine bogah; and six very small kovillas, mere empty cells, which are dedicated to the goddess Patine and to five demons. In the small square are contained a little Karandua sacred to Iswera, the Kalana Madima, a kovila dedicated to demon Bhyro, a rest house for pilgrims, and some officers. Opposite the principal dewale, both in front and rear, there are two avenues of considerable length, one terminated by a small dewale (Valliamman koil) and the other by a very large dagoba (Kiriwehera) of great antiquity in a ruinous state."

“The Kataragam dewale consists of two apartments, of which the outer one only is accessible. Its walls are ornamented with figures of different gods, and with historical paintings executed in the usual style. “Its ceiling is a mystically painted cloth, and the door of the inner apartment is hid by a similar cloth. On the left of the door, there is a small foot path and basin, in which the officiating priest washes his feet and hands before he enters the sanctum. Though the idol is still in the jungle, where it had been removed during the rebellion, the inner room appropriated to it was as jealously guarded as before; and as we cannot enter it without giving offence we did not make the attempt.”

“The only other objects that I think it necessary to notice, even in slight manner, are the *karandua* of Iswera and the Kalana Madima. The former standing on a platform in a small room, is somewhat in the shape of a common oven, and contains a little image of the god and a diminutive pair of slippers, of which we were indulged with a sight through the door. The Kalana Madima is greatly respected and it certainly is the chief curiosity at Katragam. It is a large seat made of clay, raised on a platform with high sides and back, like an easy chair without legs; it was covered with leopard skins, and contained several instruments used in the performance of temple rites; and a large fire was burning by the side of it. The room, in the middle of which it is erected is the abode of the resident brahmen. The Kalana Madima, this brahmen said, belonged to Kalana Nata, the first priest of the temple, who, on account of great piety, passed immediately to heaven without experiencing death, and left the seat as a sacred inheritance to his successors in the priestly office, who have used it instead of a dying bed; and it is his fervent hope that like them he may have the happiness of occupying at once and

of breathing his last on it. He said this with an air of solemnity and enthusiasm that seemed to mark sincerity, and combined with his peculiar appearance was not a little impressive. He was a tall spare figure of a man whom a painter would choose out of a thousand for such a vocation. His beard was long and white; but his large dark eyes, which animated a thin regular visage, were still full of fire, and he stood erect and firm without any of the feebleness of old age."

"A yellow handkerchief girded his loins; a red robe was thrown over one shoulder; a string of large beads hung from his neck; and on his right arm he wore a bracelet of the sacred beads that are believed to contain the figure of Lakshame."

"The Katragam god is not loved but feared; and his worship is conducted on this principle."..... "A merit was made of the hazard and difficulty of the journey through a wilderness, deserted by man and infested with wild animals, and the fever which prevails at the season was referred to the god and supposed to be inflicted by him on those who had the misfortune to incur his displeasure."

"In the adjoining country there are a few small villages which belong to the temple, whose inhabitants are bound to perform service for the lands which they hold. The officers of the temple, besides the brahmen priests, are a Basnaike-rale, who has the superintendence of the temporal concerns of the establishment under the control of Agent of Government, and 12 kapuralas who do duty in turns. On our arrival they were all assembled. Their gloomy discontented appearance and unmannerly behaviour corresponded with their conduct during the rebellion in which they took a most active part."

"Before we had possession of the country, Katragam was greatly frequented. The number of pilgrims is now annually

diminishing, and the buildings are going to decay. In a few years probably they will be level with the ground, and the traveller will have difficulty in discovering their site."

5. *Simon Casie Chetty in his Gazetteer of 1834.*

"So great is the veneration in which the shrine of this god (of Kataragama) is held, the pilgrims from every part of India resort to worship it, frequently bringing with them pots of water from Ganges at Benares, slung on cross bamboos."

"A grand festival is held in the month of July, and continues for several days; and according to a long standing custom, Moormen are obliged to bear torches before the image when it is taken out and carried in procession."

6. *Mr. J. Dickson, the Service Tenures Commissioner, for 1871:-*

"There is one question connected with the Vihare and dewale estates, which must before long force itself on the consideration of Government. There is no means of ensuring the due application of the rents from these estates to their legitimate purposes. The labour which should be employed on the repair of the ecclesiastical buildings is frequently taken for the erection of private buildings of the priests and lay incumbents, and the dues are often not accounted for. The complaints of misappropriation of the temple property are frequent. Even the land is sometimes sold to ignorant purchasers, and when the services are commuted, this misappropriation, if not checked, will increase to the serious demoralization of the priests and Basnaikas. In a village near Badulla nearly the whole of the land is in the hands of one family, which holds the office of Basnayaka of the dewale to which the village is said to belong. But the dewale is in ruins, the processions are not conducted, and the Government gives up its tythe only to enrich a private family."

7. *Mr. T. Steele, A. G. A. Hambantota, in his Administration Report of 1873:-*

“For 50 weeks in the year the hamlet (Kataragama) wears a very forlorn aspect, a few temple tenants being the only persons there. During the fortnight of the festival, however; crowds of pilgrims, not only from all districts in Ceylon, but also from distant parts in India, and occasionally some even from Kashmir, flock to the place. Until the Ceylon Government began 3 years ago to put up huts and provide magisterial supervision, medical attendance, police guards, and the like, the pilgrimage was falling off in popularity and consequence; and there appeared a prospect of its rapidly dwindling of its own accord into insignificance and disuse. Since, however, these steps have been taken the yearly concourse has been gathering strength, about 2000 persons having attended in 1871, 5000 in 1872 and from 6000 to 8000 in 1873. The pilgrims themselves now boast that the festival is under the special protection and encouragement of the Government and there seems ample reason to believe that in a few years not 5000 or 8000 but 20,000 will flock thither. What the consequences will then be in the event of an outbreak of disease, it is appalling to contemplate; and it is well that the impossibility should be faced in time.”

“Singularly enough the Mussalmans of India also profess reverence for Kataragama and have built a mosque there, alleging that a *Nabi* of great sanctity discovered in the neighbourhood the *fountain of life*, of which whoever drinks becomes immortal! The fountain is now sealed, and its site unknown, which is the more to be regretted, as no fountain or well of any kind is to be found for probably 20 miles round about. The hamlet is solely dependent for water in the river; and this in July 1873, as occasionally in previous years, dried up completely. Fortunately by sending a special messenger express to Badulla

and obtaining authority to deprive the land holders of Buttala, higher up the stream, of the supplies needed to cultivate their fields, water for the pilgrims was this year obtained in time. Had this not been effected, the consequences would have been terrible, as fever and dysentery were both prevailing. On the hardship sustained by the people of Buttala I do not dwell here. It may be mentioned that the mosque is visited by fakirs from India, but is not held in any reverence by Mohammaders of Ceylon."

"Besides the mosque there are the remains of a Buddhist vihara and dagoba which have long been in ruins. It is remarkable that even the Hindu worshippers who attend the festival are careful to make offerings on the site of the vihara."

"The civil guardians of the temple and temporalities including a domain of many thousands of acres is a Buddhist headman, the Basnayake Nilame, a resident at Badulla, chosen by the votes of certain electors in the Uva District. He has sole charge and draws a share of the offerings made by the pilgrims. The largest share of the profits of the establishment so to speak, is believed, however, to be netted by the leaders who organise the pilgrimages from Colombo and Kandy, and who manage the fund raised for providing suitable equipment for the God on his yearly journey to Kataragama, and food for the pilgrims accompanying him. From the funds a handsome brick wall has this year (1873) been put up round the court yard, with an ornamental gateway, at a very considerable cost.

"Mortality caused by the festival. The scenes that occasionally occur in connection with the festival and pilgrimage are very distressing. Fifteen years ago, in 1858 at which time I was stationed at Galle, a terrible out-break took place, and I may perhaps, although it is an old story now, be permitted to quote some notes made by me at the time:—"The pilgrims when at

Kataragama were attacked by cholera and other epidemics, and great mortality ensued. Whether the diseases were brought by them to Kataragama, or sprang into sudden life and energy there spontaneously, all the predisposing causes of unhealthy locality, exposure unwholesome and scanty food, bodily weakness and weariness and overstrung nervous excitement, being abundantly present, was disputed; but, once introduced their ravages were appalling. Regardless of the rites they have travelled so far to take part in, regardless of the closest ties of kindred or friendship, the panic stricken pilgrims fled for their lives, leaving in many cases their companions to perish by the waysides, and spreading pestilence wherever they went. Like wild fire cholera spread from hamlet to hamlet, from station to station. It was piteous to see forlorn women, forsaken by their husbands, their children dying beside them, wailing in all the agony—short-lived but incredibly passionate—of oriental grief.

8. *Dr. M. Covington of Batticaloa, in an article published in the Literary Supplement of the Examiner and reprinted in The Orientalist Vol. III. 1887-1889, pp. 149-156.*

“In the second century before the Christian era, when Kavantissa, who built Tissamaharama Vihara, about 180 B. C. was the ruler of Mahagama, and a tributary prince to the Malabar King Elala, who then ruled over all Ceylon, having established his capital at Anuradhapura, Dutugemunu, the son of the former, conceived the idea of liberating his country from the dominion of the latter. While his thoughts were constantly engaged in the design both day and night, he was warned in a dream not to embark in this dangerous enterprise, contrary to the positive injunction of his father, unless he could, by a pilgrimage to, and penance at, the shrine of Kataragama first secure the divine interposition of the god of war in his favour, The day after his dream, the prince, all of a sudden, put on the garb of a pilgrim and proceeded to

Kataragama with only ten of his followers, who had subsequently become his favourite generals and warriors. He remained at the holy spot on the bank of the Menik-ganga, performing for a fortnight acts of devotion and penance imploring the supernatural aid of the god of war in his warlike expedition against the usurper. While he was thus engaged in prayer and meditation there appeared suddenly before him a Pandaram, or mendicant, but his presence had produced on the prince such an indescribable feeling of reverence and fear that he was at once awe-struck, and he fainted and fell at his feet. He soon recovered consciousness and prostrated himself before the god who appeared in the guise of a mendicant. Here the terrible god of war stood in bodily presence before the terror-stricken prince, and assured him that his arms would surely prevail against Elala and that he would fall a victim to his javelin if he encountered him in single combat. After the assurance of victory thus graciously vouchsafed to him by Kataragama Devi, the prince departed with a gladdened heart, making a vow that he would build a temple and dedicate it to him immediately after his return from Anuradhapura, where he at once proceeded with an army to give battle to Elala and kill him in personal fight, as revealed to him in his vision."

"It is, therefore, believed that the present temple was built more than 160 years B. C. by the conqueror of Elala, and largely endowed with land revenues arising from several villages and fields set apart by him and his successors in the south-eastern divisions of the Island for the maintenance of the temple. These endowments were originally intended to be appropriated to the service of the temple in performing its daily pujas, conducting its periodical festivals, repairing its different buildings, and maintaining its priests and attendants. A Basnayaka Nilame, or manager is now appointed to manage

the affairs of the temple, to collect its revenue and control its expenditure; and I believe a portion of the annual income, say at least £100, arising from the offerings of the people, is shared between himself, the kapuralas, and other male and female temple attendants, who are engaged in the due performance of its several rites and ceremonies. It is not unusual now-a-days for the temple tenants to neglect their regular attendance on the festivals, as required by their tenure of the temple lands. I cannot here refrain from recording as the result of my own personal observation, during the present festival, that the temple of Kataragama is fast losing that celebrity which it has been long enjoying throughout India and Ceylon."

9. * *Interim report of the Commissioners of Buddhist Temporalities, Sessional Paper XXIV of 1920.*

The conditions of the temple properties at Kataragama left very much to be desired, and the Commissioners desire to express here their dis-satisfaction with the condition of things they found there. Further remarks in this connection will be reserved for the final report, after members of the Badulla District Committee and the auditor of these accounts have been examined. The Commission examined the jewels, which the Basnayaka Nilame said were valued at Rs. 50,000, which seemed a very excessive estimate for those now in the treasury. The most valuable gift to the temple was stated to be a tusker elephant, which had escaped. The considerable gifts of cattle and paddy do not appear to be satisfactorily accounted for.

There are no doubt great difficulties in the way of securing honest and competent trustees - men cannot be obtained who will undertake the duties entirely for religious motives and without remuneration, that there are such is no doubt true, but these cases are few and far between.

(*The final report does not allude to the above matter. Ed.:*)

BAD ADMINISTRATION.

Since the occupation of the Island by the British, the pilgrimage to Kataragama became ever increasing and was augmented by the Indian coolies working on coffee estates. Soon, due to insanitary conditions, cholera spread. Large number of pilgrims together with the inhabitants of villages far and near became victims to the dread disease. In spite of precautions taken by Government, cholera appeared again and again, and steps were taken to restrict the number of pilgrims. In 1889, when Governor Sir Arthur Gordon honoured the festival by his presence, there was only a handful of pilgrims. Further and more successful measures adopted by Government to prevent such epidemics gradually restored and encouraged the pilgrimage, so much so, that there has been a prodigious increase lately and the number can be safely estimated at 12 to 20 thousand a year.

ENDOWED BY KINGS.

The temple was from time to time, endowed by the kings of Ceylon, and on account of such endowments, about 60,000 acres of land were assigned to the temple by the Temple Lands Commissioner, but the temple authorities who divided among themselves the ever increasing revenues of the temple, could not find the necessary fund to pay the survey fees to Govt. ! The temple revenue is operated under the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance purely on account of the accident that the dewale was endowed and is situated in the Kandyan provinces. But was any endeavour ever made by the higher authorities to scrutinize the correctness of the revenue and expenditure accounted for?

A HINDU SHRINE.

Kataragama has been a Hindu Shrine for the last 5000 years or more. Those who worshipped there and managed it

even after the advent of Buddhism to Ceylon were Hindus. King Dutugemunu and King Raja Sinha who were responsible for the building of the temple—like many other kings of Ceylon—were Hindus.

The Kapuralas, who are now considered Sinhalese, originally belonged to a Tamil tribe called Kurinchi and are still of pure blood and therefore Hindus. The God worshipped is one of the most prominent of the Hindu pantheon. He does not belong to the type of Pitiya Dewiyos, Dadimunda Devatavas or Wannia Bandaras, heroic god-lets, commonly revered in Sinhalese villages. When the population of Ceylon became Buddhists, they did not give up the worship of the Kataragama Devio and temples for him were attached to Buddhist Viharas of importance and peraheras or processions and water cutting ceremonies, following Hindu ceremonies, were conducted in his honour. Buddha's Tooth, now the chief feature of the Kandy procession formed no part of it till the 18th century, when it was introduced by the order of Kirti Sri Raja Sinha to humour the Buddhist monks he had imported from Siam.

MANAGEMENT.

At present the important temples at Kataragama are under two important managements. The Kataragam Dewale in which Kandaswamy or Kataragam Dewiyo is worshipped, the Valliamman temple dedicated to the consort whom Kandaswamy married at Kataragama and the Pattini Dewala dedicated to Kannagi, the goddess of chastity, whose worship was introduced to Ceylon during the time of Gaja Bahu I, are under the management of the Basnayake Nilame appointed by the Badulla District Committee functioning under the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance. The Basnayake Nilame is the only Buddhist touch in the whole concern. This was due, as stated earlier, to the accident of the situation of the temple and to the

heavy endowments. The Basnayake Nilame supervises the collections of all the revenues belonging to these temples arising out of gold, silver and cash offerings which are considerable during festivals, the produce of the endowed lands and the gifts of cattle and paddy, and render accounts half yearly to the District Judge of Badulla. The movables alone of the temples, consisting of gold and silver offerings were in 1919 valued at Rs. 50,000. To what extent should they have increased during the last 18 years? The Undial is appropriated by the Basnayake Nilame who is expected to furnish an account. The administration of these revenues has been always far from satisfactory. One of the old Basnayake Nilames was fined three times for failing to render accounts and the fines were perhaps paid out of the revenues of the temple. The accounts are said to be audited by a Public Accountant who perhaps sees to the correctness of the addition and subtraction only. The District Judge or his officers have no time to scrutinize the accounts in all their details. The Hindus being responsible for the bulk of the revenue, are they not entitled to know how the revenues are disposed of? Is not the trustee on honour bound liable to disclose his audited accounts to the Hindu Public?

REVENUE

From the report of the Public Trustee for the year 1932, it can be traced that the audit fees paid by the trustee for the years 1929 and 1930 were Rs. 617-44 and Rs. 700-03 respectively. Proportionately what would have been the annual receipts? Now that the Public Trustee has the control of the finances we are at least in a position to know the extent of the revenue of these temples. In 1933 this amounted to Rs. 2996-23, and after deducting expenses the credit balance was found to be Rs. 1495-58. What the credit balances of the previous

years were, is not known. Another surprising information, we are able to gather, is that the offerings made at the ruined Kiri Wehera, known to the Hindus as Suran Malai, and collected by the Public Trustee in 1933 amounted to Rs. 906-32. Could it be believed that the revenue of the Hindu Dewala was only three times of what this much neglected and scantily worshipped Buddhist ruins earned from the Hindu pilgrims? In 1934 the gross collection was Rs. 8907-15 and in 1936 Rs 3940-19. The collection for 1935 is not given in the Public Trustee's Report.

ARCHANABHOGA

The *Archanabhoga* which must annually amount to more than double of the *Undial* collection is solely appropriated by the *kapurala*, following the tradition that the priest who performs the *archana* in other Hindu temples is entitled to the *archanabhoga*. The *kapurala* never performs any *archana*, nor does he know how to perform it, although he refuses to take anything below 25 cents from each individual. Thus the ignorant pilgrims who are not aware of what takes place behind the curtain, allow themselves to be cheated of their money. It is no doubt true that in smaller temples, the *Archanabhoga* is the perquisite of the priest, but it is not so in temples where the congregation is large as at Kataragama. Most of the educated pilgrims who are aware of this sharp practice invest their money in more camphor, but the ignorant devotee is not satisfied unless he follows the customary practice. Separate accounts should be kept of the *archana* collections and the *kapurala* be paid a moiety of it.

IMPROVEMENTS

Has any improvement permanent or otherwise been effected by the trustee or the other temple authorities on the temple premises for the last 500 years? All the minor temples,

resting places, madams &c. have been built by the pilgrims and other devotees. The management has never attended to the accommodation and convenience of the pilgrims. They were allowed to shift for themselves as best they could. No attempt has ever been made to slake the thirst of tired pilgrims on the routes from Buttala and Tissamaharama either way to Kataragama. Nothing has yet been done to supply good, filtered water for drinking purposes at Kataragama. The road from Tissa and the approaches to the river have not been improved. The path to the summit of the hill is never kept clean or in order. The jungle round the temple premises is never cleared for the convenience of pilgrims who now crowd and huddle together in the temple veediyas and the river banks. The management has not seen to the building of a well-ventilated and sanitary chatiram for the accommodation of paying pilgrims, instead of allowing illventilated and dismal looking madams to be erected in nooks and corners by religious devotees. The task of supplying water to pilgrims who throng his madam, by the process of pumping water from the river, has been left to the enterprise of an individual who has dedicated his life for the service of the pilgrims. Another Sadhu has undertaken the task of supplying water to those who climb the hill. Societies of Hindu young men have been formed to ease the troubles of pilgrims at Colombo and Matara, and to supply water on the dreary route from Tissa to Kataragama. But the temple management has evinced no interest or activity of any kind all these centuries. How can a person of one religion be expected to display any interest in the management of affairs of another religion? Unless some interest is shown no increase in revenue can ever be expected.

SCANDALOUS ADMINISTRATION

In this connection, the striking words of Sir P. Arunachalam who, as a constant pilgrim for several years, personally knew a

great deal about Kataragama and its requirements, are worthy to be quoted. He said:—

“King Dutugemunu invoked the aid of the God and received his help and built and endowed the temple at Kataragama in fulfilment of his vow. The royal endowment was continued and enlarged by his successors and by the offerings of generations of the people and princes of Ceylon. This old and once wealthy foundation has for years been in a woeful plight, from loss of the State patronage and supervision which it enjoyed under native rule and owing to the corruption and dishonesty of the Sinhalese trustees and priests, in whom under the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance its administration is vested. Its extensive estates have mostly passed into other hands, the property that remains is neglected, the temple buildings are in disrepair and the daily services are precarious. The Hindu pilgrims, however, continue to flock in thousands, pouring their offerings without stint and wistfully looking forward for the day which will see the end of the scandalous administration.”

The Theyvanai Amman temple dedicated to the second consort of Kandaswamy, the Manikka Pillaiyar temple dedicated to Ganesha Muttulingaswamy temple dedicated to Saint Kaliyanapuri Swami, the hill shrine on the top of Kadiraimalai and the Pillaiyar temple at Sella Kadirgamam—all these are under the management of the Senior Bawa in the line of succession to the said Kaliyanapuri Swami. This trustee is appointed by the District Judge of Badulla on the suggestion of two or three Hindus, according to a deed of succession executed by Kesapuri Swami or Palkudi Bawa in 1898 and another deed executed by Surajpuri Bawa in 1918, twenty years after the demise of Palkudi Bawa. These temples do not come under the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance and the Trustee is

not bound to render an account to anybody. The revenue derived from these temples perhaps go to the mutt at Benares to which these North Indian Swamis belong.

It is rather curious that the Basnayake Nilame should have allowed foreigners who have not the slightest interest in the country of their sojourn to erect temples on the temple land and collect revenue which should normally go to swell the revenue of the old temples. On account of this indiscretion on the part of the Basnayake Nilame and the District Committees in not executing leases for the lands on which these temples stand, there is nothing to prevent the present trustee or his successors in office from claiming prescription and from refusing to pay any part of the revenue they derive if ever any demand is made. There will be no remedy to this incubus which came into existence within the last fifty years.

On account of these unsatisfactory state of affairs the Hindu devotees have of late refrained from making any large donations to the temples and do liberally subscribe to those who are engaged in building madams or feed the multitudinous crowd of mendicants and estate coolies who annually frequent the place. If the management can be improved and if the Hindu devotees are assured that their offerings will be directed into proper channels, it would not require a prophet to foretell that the revenue of the temple will be doubled or trebled.

Taking advantage of the activities of the Ceylon Buddhists in order to obtain a share of the management of Buddha Gaya in India, the Hindus of Ceylon are agitating that the management of Kataragama temple should be given over to them, as they think that the Basnayake Nilame who is a Buddhist and who attends the temple during the festivals only is not a person interested in the development and advancement of a Hindu

temple. It is hoped that if they succeed it will not be a case of falling from the frying pan into the fire. Either among the Buddhists or among the Hindus, it will be impossible to find two honest and competent laymen to reside at Kataragama and carefully manage its temporalities. They ought to be god fearing, pious and highly religious. Such persons can be found only among the most religious ascetics and their number is not a legion. The best course would, therefore, be to take the necessary steps to have the Temporalities Ordinance so amended as to make provision for the appointment of a Board of management supervised by the Public Trustee, to bring together all revenues including Archanabhoga and of the temples managed by the Kashmir Brahmins, to allot certain varying amounts to the Kapurala and the Brahmins, for the work they do, and deposit the balance, using such accumulation for the performance of laudable objects determined by the Public Trustee and the Board of Management, which should consist of the Basnayake Nilame appointed by the District Committee, the Kapurala, the Kashmir Brahmin manager and two other respectable Hindus. Nobody should handle any money, and Archana should be performed on receipts issued. The Basnayake Nilame should be made to take more interest about the management of the endowed lands and lease all lands that are not in the possession of those who render services to the temple, The cattle which now run wild in the jungle should be collected and sold to persons who are not butchers. The gold and silver offerings which are not used for temple purposes should be sold and the proceeds should go to swell the revenue. The details of the working system can be later arranged if my suggestion as to the appointment of the Board of Management can be made practicable. Until then the present unsatisfactory state of management will continue and Hindus may go on agitating day after day without having recourse to any

practical device. The Basnayake Nilame, in the meantime can, prove his bona fides by fixing two locks to the Undial Box and handing over one key to the Public Trustee.





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