

CLASSIC KOVAI

Hoary Past of Ramar Temple @ Ram Nagar Neighbourhood

Long ago, the Ramnagar region was used for agriculture. Coimbatore began to grow in the twentieth century and this kind of non linear growth coupled with the frequent visitations of plague made the people and the local administration think of new residential areas. The lawyers of the city used to live in Thomas Street, Karuppa Gounder Street, Raja Street and Telugu Brahmin Street for centuries. A handful of them approached headed by K.S.Arthanareeswara Aiyer approached the then Collector, Slater and requested him to allot a separate residential colony of advocates and their clerks. The Collector let the advocates choose the land. The lands so chosen were known as Ranganathapuram and Karivaradapuram. Every advocate was allotted 25 cents and clerks were given 12 cents. The sanitary line at the back took up 1 cent of land. The new area came to be known as Coimbatore Brahmanal Pudu Agraharam or Brahmin Extension.

The residents felt the need for a temple and the 'Coimbatore Brahmanal Pudu Agrahara Alaya Nirmana Committee' was formed and 85 cents of land was purchased on 13/4/1928 for Rs.2975 from the Zamindar of Uthukuli Diwan Bahadur Muthuramaswamy Kalingarayar with the condition that the land should be used for the construction of a temple otherwise it had to be reconveyed to the original owner at the same price. C.S.Duraiswamy Iyer, R.Seetharama Iyer, M.K.Srinivasa Iyengar, C.R.Kalyanasundara Iyer, K.M. Narayana Iyer, Rao Bahadur S. Sessa Sastriar, Rao Sahib C.S.Venkatanarasiah, B.V.Subramania Iyer, R.Chellappa Iyer, M.S.Krishna Rao, C.C.Srinivasa Iyer were the members of the committee at the time of the purchase of land. The Kodandaramaswamy Temple or RAMAR TEMPLE was constructed with the funds raised from the public. The compound wall was constructed due to the efforts taken by N.R.Subramania Iyer and locality was renamed as RAMNAGAR after the attainment of freedom due to the patriotic fervour that existed in the minds of the residents. The people wanted good governance in the neighbourhood of the temple were the perfect administrator Lord Rama resided. The streets were named after freedom fighters and patriots like Sengupta, Ansari, Sarojini Naidu, Rajaji, Patel etc.,

The Ramar Temple was meant to be inclusive and was built for the worship of all the three prominent branches belonging to the Hindu society namely Dwaitam, Advaitam and Visishtadwaitam. Therefore Lord Hanuman is being offered prayers as per Dwaita philosophy, Lord Ganesha as per Advaita philosophy and Lord Kodandarama as per Visishtadwaita philosophy. The centuries older Pettai Visweswaraswamy Temple near Raja Street is a precursor in this regard. This temple was known as a Brahmin Extension temple for long and a lot of information about the healthy debates concerning the framing of rules for the temple are found in the hand writing of N.S.Venkatasubba Aiyar (father of Advocate N.V.Nagasubramanian) who had served as the Joint Secretary, Secretary and President with utmost dedication. Ramar Temple is recognised as a denomi-

nation temple and the rules framed for administration were approved by the General Body on 14/1/1934 and 18/3/1934. The rules came into force on 14/1/1935. The temple is managed by nine trustees. It is managed by the trustees belonging to the denomination forming the General Body.

The records tell us that Diwan Bahadur P.Somasundaram Chettiar (Kaleeswarar Mills & Somasundaram Mills) had donated Rs.4000 for constructing the Ramar Sannidhi and his son P.S.Sathappa Chettiar (Founder Chairman - Southern India Mills Association) gave a sum of Rs.1000 for the Mahamandapam. One Siruthonda Drama Company had contributed Rs.760 those days. Rs.10362 was collected from 87 people as of 25/11/1932 under the signature of C.R.Kalyanasundara Iyer. Kolumam K.Venkatakrishna Iyer had donated Rs.1300 towards construction of the Vinayagar Sannidhi. Of the Rs.455 that was spent for the Yantra Prathishta and pooja, Rs.350 was borne by the Government and Rs.100 was donated by C.R.Lakshminarayana Iyer. The platform around the Peepul Tree was constructed at a cost of Rs.75 which came from Srinivasa Rao, the Secretary of Indian Bank. The Navagraha Sannidhi was constructed later and permission was sought by T.V.Subramania Iyer to instal the deities on behalf of his brother in law Gopalswamy Iyer from the General Body and it was approved on 14/1/1934. T.S.Sankara Iyer put up the office room for sale of archana tickets. It was in the year 1941 that three rooms were constructed for a grocery shop and the same was given to the Coimbatore Co Operative Stores for the rationing of commodities during the second world war.

The Pravachana Mandapam came up after the laying of the foundation (17/6/1965) by H.H.Abhinava Vidyatheertha Swamiji of Sringeri. He inaugurated it on 18/2/1968 and it was named as "Srimad Abhinava Vidyatheertha Pravachana Mandapam". It became possible due to the efforts of N.S.Venkatasubba Aiyar with the substantial donations from G.K.Devarajulu (Lakshmi Group), P.R.Subramania Iyer of Srivatsa Engineering and others. Complete co-operation was extended by Dr.C.V.Ramraj, N.C.Rajan, M.K.Srinivasa Iyengar, K.A.Ramachandran and S.Kalyanasundaram. The Brahmin Extension Bhajanai Goshti was formed in the year 1943 and became the Ramnagar Bhajanai Goshti. Nott Annaji Rao (father of Haridasgiri Swamiji), Advocate C.S.Seshadri Iyer (father of C.S.Jayaraman & C.S.Balakumar), Srinivasa Iyer (affectionately known as Bhajanai Srinivasa Iyer or Srinivasa Bhagawathar), Kamakshisundara Sastriyal, A.Sadasivam, T.S Sankara Iyer (father of T.S.Ramani Sankar and T.S.Mohan Sankar), Ramachandra Iyer, Srinivasa Rao, Krishnamurthy Iyer, G.K.Seetharaman, Sriramulu and others were part of this constellation. The temple has been headed by A.R.Kalyanasundaram Iyer, C.S.Sambamurthy Iyer, K.S.Arthanareeswara Iyer, M.K.Srinivasa Iyengar, N.S.Venkatasubba Iyer, K.V.Narayanawamy Iyer, K.N.Lakshminarayana Iyer, N.C.Rajan, Dr.C.V.Ramraj, M.V.Aravumudha Iyengar, K.S.Narasimha

Iyengar, C.Janakiraman, R.Jegannathan, Dr.C.R.P.Chandran, C.G.Venkataraman and N.V.Nagasubramanian thus far and they have rendered yeomen service. Kumbabishekams have taken place on 5/2/1933, 16/2/1964, 13/6/1982, 22/10/1997 and 18/2/2008. M.S.Rajagopla Iyengar was the first priest of the temple and he served for a long time. One Thandi Pandram was the temple pookarar.

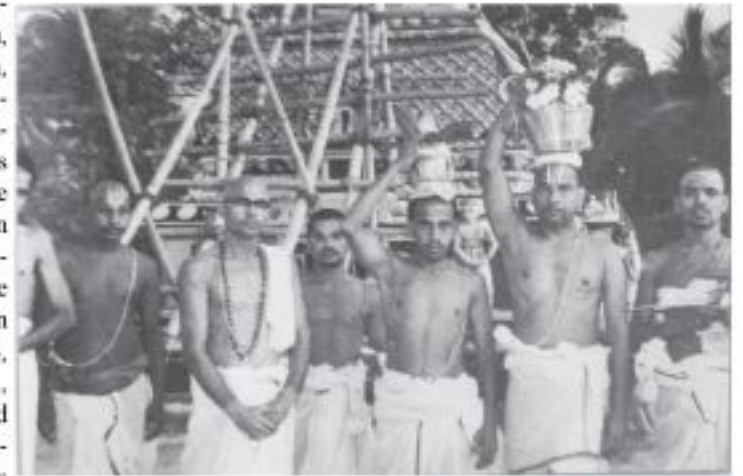
A number of great pontiffs have visited the temple over the years and several poojas, homams, yagams, vratams, lectures, bhajans and cultural performances have taken place over the decades. A number of hard working people devoted to Sanatana Dharma have contributed their time, money and energy to the temple at all times. The roles of each one of the contributors deserve to be etched in golden letters. The Rajagopuram came up later thanks to the role and donations of M.Krishnan (Sri Krishna Sweets), D.Jayawarthanavelu (LMW), S.V.Balasubramaniam (Banariamma Sugars), Chennai Silks, Nagarathar community and many others. The shrine of Lord Shiva near the vilvam tree needs a special mention.

The silver covering for the Ramar shrine door came due to the tireless efforts of the Magalirani under the leadership of Kalyani Sankar. They collected a lot of old unused silver from the households and contributed towards the making of the silver doors for the shrine of Lord Kodandaramaswamy, Seetha and Lakshmana. The 60 year old Coimbatore Thiruppavai Committee has been holding a number of lectures on Thir-

uppavai in this wonderful temple.

A number of devotees of Lord Rama are doing their best for the temple and its heartening to note the inclusive approach. Several interesting events, anecdotes and contributions make up the story and this space is insufficient to record all of them. The story of the Arulmigu Kodandaramaswamy Temple is a part of the cultural and religious history of Coimbatore.

—Rajesh Govindarajulu



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