

**SOCIO – POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF VELLALARS IN
RAMNAD REGION IN 18TH CENTURY**

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ABSTRACT

Ramnad region was related to epic Ramayana. Rameshwaram was one of the most pilgrims centres of Hindus, Rameshwaram was situated at Ramnad region. In the 18th century. Ramnad region was ruled by Sethupathi rulers. In this period various communities of people seemed to have lived in this region. Brahmin and Vellalar communities were mostly dominant these regions. The main occupation of the Vellalars was agriculture so most of the Vellalars were farmers on the basis of caste. They strongly represented the caste in each Tamil district. Some of the Vellalars played a vital role in the administrative system of the Ramnad kingdom. They did not have agriculture as their occupation but served as Pradani (Chief Minister) Administrator, Revenue Accountants, merchants and Courpoets of Sethunadu too. Thus the main attempt is to find out how the 18th Century Vellalar communities mostly contributed to the Social and Political changes in Ramnad region.

Keywords: Vellalar, Ramnad, Pradani, Dharma Magamai, Jarimagamai.

Introduction:

The term Ramnad traces its origin from the Ramanatha Swamy Temple in Rameshwaram. Lord Rama's faithful servant, Guha built a town near the Ramasethu and the town was called Ramnad. Muthu Krishnappa Nayak established the Marava country. He appointed Sadaika Thevar I as the first ruler of Marava country. Sethupathis acted as the guardian of the Ramasethu bridge. So the rulers were called as Sethupathis, for the Sethupathis of Ramnad ruled over the areas of Sethunadu for a period of 17th and 18th century. The Vellalars played a vital role in the administration of the Ramnad Kingdom.

Vellalar (or) Pillai:

The Vellalars are of the great farmer caste of the Tamil country and they strongly represented in every Tamil district. The word Vellalar is derived from vellanmai. The term vellam means water, annai means management cultivation and tillage. Vellalar stands for the cultivator of the soil

they were one of the Tamil agricultural communities. They were peace loving and were also called pillais. In religious life of the Tamil or Dravida country they came next to the Brahmins.

Vellalars in Ramnad Region:

Seventh and Eighth centuries AD one such settlement in the state was described in the Tekkattur palm leaf manuscript thus. Adondai Chakkaravarthi brought these Vellalars with him from Conjeevaram to the Chola territory and Ugraperu valudi the pandya king selected 48,000 good families and imported them from East Conjeevaram and settled them in pandya land. In the 18th century one of the Ramnadu rulers Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi (1710 – 1725) invited efficient accountants of the Vellalar caste from Madurai to Ramnad region.

Types of Vellalars:

The Cholanadu territory occupied by the Vellalars was called Konadu or the land of the king and the pandya territory the Kanadu or forest land. They were divided into several groups, such as Thondaimandala Vellalar, Cholamandala Vellalar, Pandyamandala Vellalar, Nanchilnaatu Vellalar. Pandya Mandala Vellalars are sub divided into the Karkatta (or) Karaikattu Vellalars, Arambukattu Vellalar, Kodikal Vellalar and Malaikuthy Vellalar most of these Vellalars were found to be living in Ramnad region.

Political Contribution:

Ramand ruler Kumaramutu Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi (1729 – 1735) appointed as pradani (cheifminister) Ramalingam Pillai. Ramalingam Pillai was great statesman he rendered many political services in this region. In Muthuramalinga Sethupathis (1763-1795) period, Pradani Dhamodaram Pillai, Pichaipilai, Velayutham Pillai, Muthaiah Pillai, Sangaram Pillai and Muthu Irulappa Pillai also rendered political services in Ramnad region. Pradani Muthu Irulappa Pillai incharge of revenue system and so he brought many changes in Ramnad region.

Muthu Irulappa Pillai formed 96 land revenue zones and 17 revenue taluks of Ramnad kingdom. Each taluk had a supervisor who administrated the taluks and district. These supervisors measured land and classified them on the basis on the quality of the soil. Tax were levied based on the quality of the lands. The introduction of revenue system was very useful and added more to the collection of Sethupathis treasury.

Social Contribution:

Pioneer of Mullaiperiyar Dam:

Muthu Irulappa pillai planned to convert the infertile Sethunadu into a fertile land. He drafted a scheme which would make the land fertile. He planned to link water from periyar with the vaigai

river in the east. 12 member committee headed by Muthu Irulappa Pillai stationed themselves in the western ghats, destroyed the forest and selected the location to construct dam. The proposal was also brought to the notice of the Britishers as Muthu Irulappa Pillai was an influential leader then during 1789. But this proposal and the plan to construct the dam was dropped due to lack of funds.

Muthu Irulappa Pillai introduced two Magamai schemes, Dharma Magamai and Jari Magamai. Dharma Magamai fund provided financial support to the Temple, Choultries, Mosques, Mutts and poets who were provided with paddy. Jari Magamai fund provided financial support to temple, vedic schools, orphans, poor and needy people. Muthu Irulappa Pillai destroyed the forest and laid many road routes. On most of the Highways in Ramnad region he constructs many Mutts.

Religious Contribution:

Muthu Irulappa Pillai renovated many temples in Ramnad region. He finished the chokkattan Mandapam in Rameshwaram temple. The biggest temple corridors in Rameshwaram was considered to be the Third Praharam in Asia. Starting of the construction was said by the Ramnad ruler Muthu Kumara Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi in 1740. Ramnad Pradani Muthu Irulappa Pillai finished this work in 1769. He also renovated the Nainar Kovil Naganatha Swamy temple near in Paramakudi and also conducted Kumba Abhishekam there. Muthu Irulappa Pillai was very famous for having made many construction works in Rameshwaram temple. As the homage to Muthu Irulappa Pillai a statue was constructed at the entrance in East Gopuram in Rameshwaram temple. As the homage to Muthu Irulappa Pillai a statue was constructed at the entrance in east Gopuram in Rameshwaram Temple.

Literary contribution:

Ponnettimalai Sarkarai pulavar:

He was born in Kadaaram. His father name was santha pillai. He learned Literature and Grammer from Thiruvadu Thurai Adinam Sinnappattam Siva Kolunuthu Desigar. Sarkarai Pulavar served as the Thirumalai Sethupathi, Kilavan Sethupathi and Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi. Sarkarai Pulavar had written many works in Thiruchendur Kovai, Five separate songs, prose of Vedanta Sudamani and delivered speech to on the Epic Ramayana.

Palapattai Chokkanatha Pulavar:

Madurai accountant Chokalingam Pillai was the son of Palapattai Chokkantha Pulavar. He was the court poet of Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi in the period of (1710-1725). He had written many works in Madurai Yagama Anthanthi, Rameshwara Ula (or) Thevai Ula, Alagar Killavidu

Thuthu, Madurai Mummani Kovai, Padmakrinathar Thendral Vidu Thuthu, Panaividu Thuthu, Kannivadi Narasinga Nayakkar Valamadal, Senpaganallur Sivaperuman Vandu Vidu Thuthu, Vinjaikovai, Karanthaikovai, Karanthai Varukkasovai and Seventy one separate songs were also written by Palapattai Chokkanatha Pulavar.

Sarkarai Muthu Muruga Pulavar:

Sarkarai Muthu Muruga Pulavar was the relatives of Ponnetti Maalai Sarkarai Pulavar. He remained as the court poet of kumara Muthu Vijaya Raghunatha Sethupathi. He had written Seven separate songs Mithilai Sathagam, Vairavakadavul Pathigam, Muthu Irulappa Pillai Ula, Milalai sathagam. Thiruvadu Thurai Thirusitrumbala Desikar students were Seeni Pulavar and Uyyavantha Pulavar who lived in Ramnad region, Some Vellalar also contribute literary field in Ramnad.

Conclusion:

In 18th century Vellalar communities in Ramnad region were supposed to have rendered services in social, political and literary fields. All the services as a role model to the present generation and the future as well.

Endnotes:

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