

National Seminar on
"Order of Hierarchy in the Realm of Religion and Society: A Study of Temple Institutions in Early Medieval India"

February 20-21, 2016

Venue: *Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture & Archaeology,
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal- 731235
Sponsored by ICHR*

Introduction

The temples have remained an important part of the Indian society for a long period. It has been a great strengthening factor in keeping the people united and also played a vital role as the center of social activities of particular village or town. The temples were a place of religious conversation and musical discussions. The temple as a religious institution was patronized by the state as well as other owning groups in various ways. All these have facilitated the propagation of religion, music, dance and other fine arts in the society.

The temples have provided employment to many people- like architects, sculptors, performing artists, artisans, craftsmen, and a variety of laborers. There were a number of officers for temples' maintenance. The temple offices were held by persons of various castes, but all posts of any importance and especially those which confer profit and dignity, are always held by Brahmins. Among the many officials of the temples the Brahmin priests occupy first rank, and then come the consultative committees, organizers of the temple ceremonies, revenue collectors of the temple, and the accountants. Besides these there are hosts of subordinates who assist in the administration of the temple and in the supervision and direction of religious observances.

The reciprocal relation between the religious and political establishments is also a significant development in early medieval society. In this process, temples have become the nuclei of the society and, directly or indirectly, involved in the social relations, economic, political and cultural life of the people. This process involved creation of suitable ideological, economic and cultural premises. Thus temples of early medieval India were instrumental in hierarchical formations of society.

The temple-society interface has been a theme of historical enquiry since middle of 20th century. This enquiry needs to be addressed from different perspectives and methods. The seminar is an attempt to create a platform to discuss Indian temple in historical perspective.

Aim of the Seminar:

The seminar aims to explore the ideology of Bhakti, relationship between the deity and devotee. The institutionalization of hierarchy through the temple culture, role of different castes and communities in temple affairs, temple administration, temple rituals and ceremonies, are other aspects worth analyzing and examining from fresh point of view. The changes and transition in agamas, festivals, temple centric economic activities, role of functionaries, temple and agrarian expansion, practice of untouchability and graded inequality, etc. will be placed for analysis in the seminar. Different aspects of order of hierarchy in the realm of religion and society of the early medieval India will be focused in elaborate manner.

The seminar will bring out so many novel facets of temple culture and social hierarchy of early medieval India and this will lead to understand the order of the social hierarchy in the realm of religion and society in terms of the study of temple institutions.

Sub Themes:

1. Institutionalization of hierarchy through temple culture
2. Role of Caste in Temple affairs
3. Role of Bhakti in temple culture
4. Temple functionaries and Mathas
5. Labour and Temple construction
6. Temple Administration
7. God and salvation
8. Intermediaries between god and devotee
9. Rituals and Ceremonies
10. Architect and Architecture
11. Temple and Agamic tradition
12. Temple Centric Economic Activities
13. Servants of Temples
14. Temple and Agrarian Expansion
15. Untouchability and Graded Inequality

The seminar will have academic sessions of paper presentation by invited resource persons. The academicians and research scholars can also participate and present their papers. We would be grateful to have your scholarly presentation in the seminar.

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