

1. Rama Moorthy, HMS, Andhra Pradesh

BIO-NOTE:

Was born in 1945. Exact date of birth not known. His forefathers were priests and he himself got educated in Sanskrit and became an astrologer. But he took up a clerical job in the port and began trade union activities in HMS. Among his many activities are to look after the organisation of temple workers. He as one of the secretary-incharge of the HMS, looks after the workers of Simhachalam temple workers. There are 460 employees in this temple. They are well-organised with regular meetings, conferences and other forms of activities. There is a Temple Employees' Association (TEA) there. They are guided by rules framed by the state government.

Besides temple workers, Rama Moorthy looks after ministerial (clerical), municipal and other workers. As he said, the "union is god" for workers in matters material.

TRANSCRIPTIVE NOTE:

(The interview was recorded in the HMS office in Vishakhapatnam on September 9, 2004 at 2.30 pm. He provided very quick replies to our questions, though there was a slight language problem.)

He is an interesting history as he works in the Temple Employees Association (TEA). His forefathers served the Bobbili Princely State as Rajpurohiths and other similar official capacities. At the same time, they were very rich having hundreds of acres of land. On being asked as to

what happened to those land, he simply replied that they got used up and sold off as they were not properly looked after. He himself took up a job and now works in the HMS. He was an astrologer and could perhaps continued the tradition.

Born in 1945, he took up the study of Sanskrit and learnt astrology. But while working on port, he came in contact with HMS people and became a trade unionist. As one of the secretaries here, he looks after temple workers, "ministerial" (clerical) employees, municipal workers, etc.

The temple workers in AP are fairly well organised. They have unions and associations at several places. In Andhra the employees of the Devasthanam Trust are covered by the government rules and regulations, including about salaries, etc. It is under their guidance that payments are made. The general rules are applicable broadly to recruitments also.

On behalf of the HMS, Rama Moorthy looks after the TEA in Simhachalam. It has 460 employees. They have regular annual conferences, meetings, consultations, negotiations, etc. They are hardly ever forced to undertake agitational methods. Rama Moorthy told us that the priests are appointed on the basis of certain knowledge of Sanskrit and the scriptures.

It was in 1978 that the Devasthanam workers' union was formed. HMS earlier used to control several unions but today it is not so. Rama Moorthy admitted that even though the workers believe in god and for spiritual matters they remember the almighty, for material matters like wages and money, they look to the union. "Union is their god in these matters", "we are the gods here".