

URBAN LAND LAWS

HAD THE Tamil Nadu Urban Land laws gone through the customary legislative process with the advantage of examination of the measure by a Select Committee of the Legislature, many difficulties that have been pointed out in the columns of the press could have been avoided. It is too late in the day to resist any measure of control over urban land holdings. Nor do the land sharks, who have the wherewithal to speculate on urban land values, deserve much sympathy and consideration. Many of them have already escaped the law through transfers to trusts controlled and manipulated by them. It is only the middle and lower middle class people who need to be saved from the rigours of the law. For instance, a person with a house on 6 grounds is better off under the law than another with a house on 3 grounds owning another 3 grounds of vacant site. Again, a joint Hindu family is worse off under the law than divided families holding urban lands. A husband and wife owning sepa-



rate houses are better off than the spouses each owning a house site. In an era where the women's liberation movement is asserting a woman's right to acquire, own and dispose of property independently of the husband, it is strange that a woman's urban land should be clubbed with her husband's for the calculation of ceiling. While there may be a case for such clubbing where urban land was purchased out of funds provided by the husband, there can be none in the case of self-acquisition by career women and the like.

By some strange coincidence, urban land values have been revis-

ed as of 1971 five to ten times over the 1961 market rates at a time when urban land values have plummeted as a result of the ceiling law. It is difficult to believe that urban land values have grown five to ten times during the last ten years. It may be noted that the maximum compensation has been fixed under the Urban Land Ceiling at around one rupee per square foot, while urban land values as of 1971 have been fixed at rates varying from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20 per square foot in residential areas. If such exaggerated valuation is adopted for other purposes like assessment of Wealth Tax, house ownership will become a liability and housing activity will be totally extinguished. A stray sale deed cannot be a basis for the valuation of land in an entire area and any assessment on that footing is bound to cause hardship and misery. Without wasting time in the tortuous process of appeals and investigation, the Government may be well advised to review the entire levy and remedy the situation.

deities, Murugan and Vinayaka, start appearing probably from the 6th century. All these go to prove that the Kalabhras, like all Indian rulers, were extremely impartial in their religious attitude and encouraged all the faiths prevailing among their subjects.

An extremely interesting coin from Madurai (illustrated on pages 3 and 4) contains on one side the figure of Murugan and on the other side that of Vinayaka. There are also separate coins with either one or other similar figure. It is an old looking copper piece, rectangular, somewhat irregular, measuring 1.3 x 1.1 centimetres and weighing 1.5 grammes. The standing figure diagonally across the coin is Murugan. The legs are turned left and right. The body is a truncated triangle with 6 hands, three on either side. The right hand is holding a long staff with what looks like a battle axe at the top. Along the left edge of the coin in bold Brahmi script is an inscription reading 'Achuvikanta Kalabara' with many letters worn

out. The representation is linear and the original in the shrine from which it was copied must have been made of wood. The identification as Murugan is not difficult. On the other side is a clear Vinayaka, his brother.

Murugan with a single head and six hands is still found in some old temples as for example in Kodikadu, near Vedaranyam, in Thanjavur district. A similar figure is also seen in Kazhugumalai in Tirumelveli district. The Subramanya of later days with 6 heads, 12 hands and the peacock mount was the result of a synthesis between the northern Skanda and the southern Murugan cults. The tribal republic of Yaudheyas of eastern Punjab had Skanda or Kartikeya as their tutelary deity and represented him in their 2nd and 3rd century coins, sometimes with 6 heads and sometimes with one head and 2 hands. They called him Brahmanyadeva which became Subramanya in the South.

The figures of Vinayaka, almost modern-looking on the other side,

is most astonishing. It is seated in the upper right corner, with Mukuta and 4 hands. The paunch is a fine rounded one. On the left some letters are faintly visible. The figure was probably taken from a clay model.

Even today, South Indian scholars hold that Ganapati image was borrowed from Vatapi Chalukyas in the 7th century, who, in turn, borrowed it from the northern Gupta art. But here, in an ancient coin which cannot be dated later than 550 A.D., the Vinayaka figure is staring us in the face. N. Subramanyam, a South Indian scholar, in his book *Sangam Polity*, argues, correctly, in my view, that Ganapati images originated in the South and went North. The *Therianthropie* figure with elephant face seems to be the concertion of old indigenous peoples, which was later adopted in the Hindu pantheon. Very many cults and at ideas have travelled from the South to the North also. We can be sure that it is an ancient and fine Vinayaka figure portrayed in India.