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ABSTRACT

Rajaraja the Great, made arrangements to chant Thirumurai in the temples and the dancing girls to sing and dance in the temples. The tradition of chanting the Thirupathigams in the temple for the past 1000 years revealing the culture and religious attitude is unknown to the other parts of the country. This tradition was encouraged by the kings and the people and became an institution itself. Hence from the 14th Century onwards the Saiva mutts look interest in the growth of religion. Inscription of Thirubuvanecakravarti Konerinmaikondan in his 5th regnal year mentions the name of an ascetic as Chokkan Nayakkan Gnanam Perrar. Visveswara Sambu was the first to have founded Golaki Mutt in South India. The members of this mutt belonged to Pasupata, Lagulisa Pasupata and Kalamuka. Brahmecharis of these sects only learnt Vedas, Agamas and Philosophy. Performing Srirudram was very common in the mid period. Arrangements were made to perform Srirudram in the early morning for which lands were endowed and to feed twelve persons who performed Srirudram on the birth day of Mar. Sundara Pandya I whose natal star was moola, tax free lands were endowed.

Introduction

Religious renaissance brought into lime light the growth of Saivism and Vaishnavism in the golden age of the Cholas. Stone temples were constructed and as a result art and architecture developed. The sculpture of the deities in their various forms were not only the symbols of the various styles they also taught the philosophy of religion. Poojas and festivals were performed regularly in which the kings and the people participated with zeal and enthusiasm and gave gifts to the temples. Rajaraja the Great, made arrangements to chant Thirumurai in the temples and the dancing girls to sing and dance in the temples. He was responsible for the composition of ragas to the Thirupathigams.

Chanting of Thirupathigams

As a result from the beginning of 9th century onwards, chanting of Thirupathigam in the temples began and in the 10th century this grew into the worship of Saivasamayachars and reached its zenith in the 13th century. Lands were endowed for chanting Thirupathigam to 27 temples approximately in the south.¹ The tradition of chanting the Thirupathigams in the temple for the past 1000 years revealing the culture and religious attitude is unknown to the other parts of the country. This tradition was encouraged by the kings and the people and became an institution itself. Chanting of Thirupathigam must have started in the period of Vijayanandi Vikrama period itself.² This tradition slowly disappeared after the decline of the cholas and Pandiyas, eventhough the Vijayanagar Kings showed interest and tried to revive this cult.

Hence from the 14th Century onwards the Saiva mutts look interest in the growth of religion. They brought several temples under their administration and made arrangements to sing Thirumurai in the temples and it continues till date with same zeal and interest.

The inscriptions from the 9th century to 13th Century mention Thirupathigams. Thiruvoimozhi was also known as Thirupathigam in the 10-11th centuries. The Kings, high officials and the people contributed for this service. Endowment were made for the recital of Thirupathigams in the temple.

The inscriptions prove that mostly the ascetics only chanted Thirupathigams in the temples. A record in the 15th regnal year of Mar. Sundara Pandya- II records the gift of tax free lands to 11 ascetics who recited Thirupathigam in the Nellaiappa temple for their boarding and lodging. The chanters of Thirupathigam were called Thirugnanam Othumper³ and perhaps this othumper only later changed to Othuvar. The chanters are called 'Pidarar' in the inscriptions of Rajaraja.⁴ The people who chanted Thirugnanam were not only ascetics they belonged to a particular Gotram (sect) and these ascetics are found scattered throughout Tirunelveli District. It could be assumed that during the 13th century there spread a branch of Saivism in the name of Golaki and the essence of the religion is Thirugnanam and its related with Thirugnanasambandar.⁵

Golaki Mutt and Thirugnanam

There were a number of mutts in Tirunelveli District. During the 13th regnal year of Mar. Sundara Pandya II tax free gift of land was given to Aludayan Ananda kuttan to recite Thirugnanam early morning Thirupalli Eluchi service, in the temple of Thirukkamakottam Nachiar in the temple of Tirunelveli

Udaiyar.⁶ During the third regnal year of Veerapandya, Saiva Brahmins of Thiruvalliesvaram temple made an agreement with one Pugali Perumal of Golaki mutt Gnanacharya Santhanam to recite Thirugnanam.⁷

Thirugnanam

The scholars no doubt are of the opinion that Thirugnanam is of religious importance through it is not clear what the Thirugnanam speaks or who the author was. Some scholars consider that this is a hymn sung by one of the Samayachars.⁸ Inscriptions in the 28th regnal year of Rajendra III and the third regnal year of Rajaraja mention Thirugnanasambandar as Thirugnanam Perra Pillayar.⁹ So one has to assume that thevaram of Thirugnanasambandar was Thirugnanam as Sekkilar also mentions that Thirugnanasambandar got 'sivagnanam' when he drank the milk given by Goddess Parvati.¹⁰

Some scholars opine that Thevaram sung by the three Samayachars namely Thirunavukkarasar, Thirugnanasambanda and Sundarar is Thirugnanam, as Kazhi Thandavaraya in his commentary on Thiruvasaga mentions Thevaram as Thirumegnana Thiruneri Thevaram and Thirumegnana Thiruneri Tamil.¹¹ Dr. Rajamanickam assumes that this was a composition of one of the Saivacharyar of Golaki mutt.¹²

Inscription of Thirubuvanecakravarti Konerinmaikondan in his 5th regnal year mentions the name of an ascetic as Chokkan Nayakkan Gnanam Perrar.¹³

Therefore it could be ascertained that the name of a religious book was Thirugnanam and the people were called by his name.

Golaki Mutt

Visveswara Sambu was the first to have founded Golaki Mutt in South India. The members of this mutt belonged to Pasupata, Lagulisa Pasupata and Kalamuka. Brahmecharis of these sects only learnt Vedas, Agamas and Philosophy. They belonged to various parts of the country and went to various places and founded Mutts to which belong the mutts in the south.

There were teachers in these mutts to teach vedas. literature and Agamas dancing girls to sing and dance thereby encouraging fine arts, instrumentalists, physicians and servants. More or less the same arrangement were prevailing in the mutts in the south.

Golaki mutts had various santhanams (sub-sects) as given below.¹⁴

Vishakanda Thevar Santhanam	:	Ellaiyila Thevar
Bhattveera Santhanam	:	Mahadevar
Thiruvarur Vadakil Madattu Santhanam	:	Sivapatha Hridayar Asthra Deva
Bhiksha Mada Santhanam	:	Neelakanta Thevar
Tirunelveli Maligai Maduttu Alagiya Nayaka Santhanam	:	Uyyakonda Thevar
Tirunelveli Therkil Madattu Santhanam	:	Anukka Vantondar

Therefore it is clear that Golaki had a number of sub divisions known as Santhanams and the Golaki mutts were situated in Thiruvarur, Madurai and Tirunelveli and the Bhiksha Matam also belonged to Golaki Mutt.

As the Heads like Agora Sivacharya and Esana Sivacharya had relationship with the Bhiksha Mutt this Golaki Mutt seems to be a Saiva Siddhanta Mutt.

Rajamanickam opines that the Golaki Mutt Sivacharyas were the Deeksha gurus of Kalasuriya, Kakathiyas, Maluvas and Teluguchodas during Chola period and as the affixes of the Golaki mutt Sivacharyas were Sambu and Sivam, it could be assumed that the Rajagurus of the Cholas also belonged to Golaki Mutt.¹⁵

Worship of Saiva Samayachars

During Pallava period itself people started regarding the Saiva Samayachars as a number of devotees are being mentioned in the Thevaram and this cult of worshipping the devotees would have grown during the reign of the Cholas. People were enthusiastic to worship the four Saiva Samayachars and they self proud to be named after them. Appothi Adigal named his children and all his possessions after Thirunavukkarasu. There are number of inscriptions to record this cult and the people were named after the Saiva Samyacharas till 13th century A.D.

One of the signitary's name in the inscription of Veerapandya's 4th regnal year is found to be Seraman Tholan¹⁶ and an ascetic in the one of the mutts in Tirunelveli was named Anukka Vantondan.¹⁷ These two names denotes Sundara. There was a mutt in the name of Alala Sundarar where an ascetic was called Seynalur Thiruvenkadu Udaiyan.¹⁸ There were some mutts in the name of these Saiva Samayachars which were the boarding and lodging for the pilgrims.

A Kerala king by name Sangili Veeramarthanda Varma Siraivai Muthavar when he was staying at Seravan Madevi made a gift of two parrus Virapandiappereri Palarmudi tavar than in Kunrathur parru for conducting the service called Sangili Vira Marthandan sandi in the shrine of Tirunelvei Udayar and Tirukkamakottam Nachiyar¹⁹ in the year 721 i.e. 1546 A.D. His another Kollam inscription states that the copper images of the Aruvattumuvar and nine other saints were made and festivals conducted for them and that certain additions were made to the mantapam in front of the central shrine.²⁰

In the 12th and 13th centuries Saiva Siddhanta an essence of the Agamas and the principles which are found in Thirumanthiram, the first book of Saiva Siddhanta became popular.

So it could be ascertained that the Golaki was spread in the South; the cult of worshipping the Saiva devotees was encouraged and as a result Saiva mutts sprang upto probagate religious deeds and spread Saiva philosophy.

Ganapathy Cult

Endowments were made to the deity Pollapillayar enshrined in the second prakara to offer cake offerings at the morning service,²¹ to do abhishekam on atta days and also to burn lights.²²

Ekadandi Ascetics

Tax free bhikshabogam for feeding the Ekadandi ascetis in the temple was given and an exemption of certain taxes payable to the temple was made during Veerapandya deva.²³ These Ekadandis were the foremost among the ten sects of asceticism founded by Sankara in the 8th Century.

Srirudram

Performing Srirudram was very common in the mid period. Arrangements were made to perform Srirudram in the early morning for which lands were endowed and to feed twelve persons who performed Srirudram on the birth day of Mar Sundara Pandya I whose natal star was moola, tax free lands were endowed.²⁴

Conclusion

To conclude, during the reign of medieval Pandyas worship of Ganesa was prevalent; Srirudram was performed in the temple of Nellaiappar, the presiding deity, Thirugnanam was chanted and Golaki religion was popular in the South.

Notes and References

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