RELIGION IN KAPPALUR INSCRIPTIONS

Dr.G.Rangarajan
Asst.Professor,
Department Of History,
Government arts College,
Thiruvannamalai-606603.

Human beings have fear of nature's power. He believes that if he worships it, he can escape from its rage. On this basis, he started the worship of nature along with the relevant celebrations. Celebrations and festivals originated on the belief that if he made sacrifices, he could product himself control from nature. In due course, people began to give shape to nature and prayer. In this way, idol worship could have started among the people. Ancient people had fear of thunder, rain and lightning. They also believed that ghosts were responsible for diseases, and hence, they began to worship them. The famous psychologist, Sigmund Freud, also argues that the fear of nature and plight after death has made men worship nature.[1]

There is a proverb among the Tamils: "Don't live in a village where there is no temple". If something good happens, they ascribe it to god's blessing and if something bad happens, they ascribe it to god's wrath. Villagers worship rural deities with belief and fear.

Tamil Nadu is the state, which patronizes many religions. There are very many evidences to prove that since the Sangam period, onwards Tamils have lived with religious tolerance. They either castigated or punished those who belittled the religion, which was followed by the majority of people. There were no religious quarrels during the Sangam period. Religious perseverance was the characteristic of those days. It is believed that during the period of Kalapirar, which came after the Sangam period, Jains and Buddhists tortured the orthodox Hindus. But the Pallavas came after them and their period was the period of revival of orthodox religion and Bakthi movement. Saivaites and Vaishnavites joined together to uproot Jainism and Buddhism. But they did not succeed completely in their attempts, because they had enmity among themselves. During the period of Cholas, Jainism and Buddhism had reached the last phase of destruction. But Saiva and Vaishnava religions entered into rivalry. Because of this, during this period, both the sects of orthodox religions began to grow competitively.[2]

It is clearly known that all the Chola kings were Saivites as It is evident from the temples they built, the titles they assumed, the charities they did, and also from the attempts they made to propagate the 'Saivam' Besides, people treated the king as the incarnation of god. It is also known that since the kings also thought like that, they called their names after gods and named the temples after them. Through the inscriptions, we discover that they donated to other religions and built temples.[3]

The rural people not only worship their deities but also other great and chief deities. Lord Siva, Thirumal, Murugan and Pillaiyar are the popular great deities of the people and also they are related to the Vedas. In the temples of these gods (according to the rules of aagama), the Brahmana method is followed.[4]

Kappalur, which is taken for this research, is an example of religious tolerance. In this place of the Saivaites there is Thirukameeswarar Temple and for the Vaishnavites there is Veetrirukkum Perumal temple. Besides these temples, there are many seen small deities are also. Particularly in Kappalur, there are more than twenty temples. Because of this, people of this place proudly say that the temples at Kappalur and Kasi are the same.

These are the several temples in this place: Thirukameeswarar temple, Perumal temple, Veerabathirar temple, Kaliyamman temple, Dharmarasa temple, Pillaiyar temple, Poongavanathamman temple, Mulamman temple, Bhajan temple, Tanjaiamman temple, Vediyappan temple, Kullammal temple, Pachaiamman temple, Maariyamman temple, Chelliamman temple, Vallal Pillaiyar temple, Koothandavar temple, Sankaranarayanar temple, Kuthu Teerthangarar Jains temple and Harichandran temple.[5]

The Kappalur inscriptions denote how Lord Siva and Thirumal have been called differently during different periods. In addition to these deities, they denote the names of the copper statues of the deities, and Parivaara deities.[6] Besides, they also point out the details of the donations and charities given by the kings.

Thirukameeswarar

The name of the Lord Thirukameeswarar is found in many inscriptions. From the inscriptions of this place, especially the Pallava Inscriptions, which are considered to be ancient, the name of the god is not mentioned,[7] but in the Chola Period inscriptions, this god had been given many names.

Veerapandiyan Thalaikonda Parakesari, Adhita Karikalan's inscription calls this temple as Sri Kamai Nakkar.[8] Hence, it might have been the name at the beginning. But in the newly found Rajendra inscription, it has been referred to as Sri Kailayamudaya Thirukaamainakkar.[9]

In the inscription of the Vijayanagar King, Achutha Devarayar, Lord Siva is referred to as Thirukameesvararmudaiya Thambiran and Thirukameeswararmudaiyar. In the 16th century inscription, the God is referred to as Thirukameeswarar Naayanaar and in the 18th Century inscription, as Thirukameeswarar Nainaar.[10]

Though the name of the temple, Thirukameeswarar, has been in vogue continuously, the Lord's name has been changing as Nakkar Udayar, Thambiranar, Naayanaar and Nainaar. During the period of Achutha Devaraya the Sengapputheri Nagarathar community had been worshipping the goddess. During the period of Achutha Devaraya of 16th Century, Vallavarayar Bhagavanar had donated to light five lamps to Athirum Kazhal Perumaan and Aavudai Nacchiyar deities. Athirum Kazhal Perumaan refers to the dancing deity Lord Nataraja and the Aavudai Nacchiyar must have been Sivakaami, who is beside Lord Nataraja.[11] The Parakesarivarma's inscription in the Sabthamaatha temple shows that Gangakula Devi built the temple of Sankara Narayanar.[12] Sankarnarayanar is the combination of Lord Siva and Lord Thirumal. This Sankaranarayanar is referred to in the inscription of Rajaraja Chola III.[13]

Veetrirukum Perumal

The names of the Veetrirukum Perumal are seen in many inscriptions. In the Aditya Chola II inscription, which can be found in Kappalur, this temple is referred to as Kaliyathitha Vinnagar Devar.[14] Especially, the Kappalur inscription, which refers to the Perumal temple, is an ancient one. Hence, this temple was constructed during the period of Aditya II.

During the period of Rajaraja I, this temple was referred to as Srimath Duvaragai[15] and Kaliyaaditha Vinnagar Alwar[16] temple. In the inscription of Rajendra I, the temple is referred to as Jaganatha Vinnagar Temple[17] and the god as Pallikondarulina Devar[18] and in the fourth year reigning anniversary inscription of Rajaraja III, it is referred as Kaliyaditha Vinnagaralwar temple.[19]

Other Deities

It should be noted that the last part of the 9th Century inscription says that the first worship should be done in the Pidari temple and then only in the Kaadukaal Kottam.[20] Kaadukaal Kottam refers to the Durga deity. It should be known that there were two separate temples for these two deities.

Kappalur inscriptions refer not only to the deities of this place but also to the deities of other temples. The inscription of Rajendra Chola refers to the donation of Iraiyili land, situated on the Western shore of Cheyyar, by the Kamapullur Saba to the worship of Thiruvengai Palli Paramasamy.[21] In this place, Cheyyar runs down from the west to the east. Thiruvengai Palli is situated in one of the corners.

Kappalur inscription denotes the Vijayanagar emperor Devaraya's donation offered to the Thiruvannamalai temple for the worship on his birthday.[22] Similarly, it also mentions the donation of land by Kulottunga Chola to Srirangam Temple to maintain the flower garden.[23] Thus, even Thiruvannamalai and Srirangam deities are mentioned in the Kappalur inscriptions.

Days and Planets in the Inscriptions

The tradition of mentioning the period in Tamil Nadu inscriptions refers to the year of the rule of the kings. Because of the connection with the Chalukya and Rashtrakuta, in some inscriptions reference to the Saga year is found. After the period of Vijayanagar Dynasty, details of the Saga year, date and planet are given elaborately. This trend can be seen in the Kappalur inscriptions.[24] In the inscriptions of the Chola kings, Rashtrakuta's king Kannara Devan, mentions the ruling year. The year is referred to by numerals and on some occasions by letters. When one looks into the details of the inscriptions, only in two inscriptions references to waning and waxing moon are given. It is stated in the inscriptions that there is no order to do good deeds only during the waxing moon; it can be done during the waning moon also. As far as the Tamil months are concerned, gifts and donations had been given during Chithirai, Vaigasi, Aadi, Aavani, Thai, Maasi and Panguni.[25]

Festivals

Every year in the Thirukameeswarar temple, Spring festival is celebrated for ten days. Special worships are done and the deities were taken around the temple. Till the last day, the gods are decorated, taken around the town and after the promenade (Thiruveethi Ula), they reach the Lotus pond.[26]

The 'Aani Thirumanjana' festival which is meant for Sri Lord Nataraja takes place in the Tamil months of Aani and Markazhi. Every year in the month of Ippasi, on the full moon day, the deity Lingam is covered with boiled rice and it is celebrated in a grand manner. In the Veerabathrar Temple, the third day of harvest festival (Pongal) is celebrated as an exclusive festival. During the Karthigai Deepam (lighting festival), Deepa Dharsan is celebrated in a special manner. During Panguni Uthiram, Lord Annamalai and Goddess Unnamalai are decorated separately and they are led in a procession in marriage attire. The people of the town treat this marriage ritual as the first marriage event in their place. During the full moon day of Panguni month, in the Perumal temple, Rama and Sita are decorated in their marriage attire and arrangements are made for their marriage in the night time. Only after this celebration, the people of the town proceed for searching brides for thier grooms.[27]

Both Saivaism and Vaishnavism grew greatly together. It can be concluded that this place shines as a fine example of religious tolerance.

END NOTES

1.   Su. Sakthivel, **Naatupura Iyal Aaivu,** p. 57.

2.   K.K. Pillai, **Tamizhaga Varallarum Makalin Panpaadum**, p. 221.

3.   K. A Neelakanda Sastri, **Thenindya Varallaru**. P. 130.

4.   Su. Sakthivel, op.cit, p. 58.

5.   Interview with Ma. Chandrasekar, Temple Priest, Kappalur on 05.01.2009.

6.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 287-288.

7.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 277-282.

8.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 247.

9.   M. Sundramoorthy, **Tamizh Natu Siva Aalayangal.** p. 301.

10.   *Ibid*, p.301.

11.   *Ibid*.

12.   *Ibid*, pp. 301-302.

13.   *Ibid*, p.302.

14.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 267.

15.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 281.

16.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 267.

17.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 262.

18.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 262.

19.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 279.

20.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 287.

21.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 273.

22.   M. Sundramoorthy, op.cit, p. 302.

23.   A.R.E. 1938-39, Nos. 258.

24.   M. Sundramoorthy, op. cit, pp. 302-303.

25.   *Ibid*, p. 303.

26.   Interview with Ma. Chandrasekar, Temple Priest, Kappalur, on 22.02.2009.