

GENESIS AND GROWTH OF SAIVISM IN EARLY TAMIL COUNTRY

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to highlight the origin and growth of Saivism in early Tamil country. Hinduism consists of six systems namely Saivism, Vaishnavism, Ganapathiam, Kaumaram, Souram and Saktham¹. Saivism refers to the exclusive worship of Siva. Saivism means that which has connection with Siva. Saivaites worship Siva as the supreme deity. The Hinduism of Tamilagam has incorporated the Pre-Dravidian, Dravidian and Aryan religious beliefs and practices. This process of different racial practices in the sphere of religion had commenced by the Sangam age itself².

Key Words : Saivism, Lord Siva, Bhakti cult, SaivaNayanmars, Linga.

Introduction:

The Sangam literature contains numerous references to Siva and Thirumal worship³. Siva worship first started into fire worship, and then developed as sound subsequently as idol worship. In Tolkappiam⁴ in the Sutra beginning with Theivam, unevemamaram, the word Theivam indicates light. The Sangam poet Madurai Kannattanar, indicates that Sivan and Thirumal are the two great gods of ancient time⁵.

Siva is referred as the God seated under the Banyentree⁶ which implies Siva, as Dakshinamurti seated under the Kallal tree. It has been said that Siva preached the message of the Vedas to the people of the world⁷. He is believed to have created the Panchabutras. Madurai Kanchi says that Lord with axe is the creator of water earth fire, air and the stars⁸. Siva is called by several names. He is called Mukkat selvar as he has three eyes⁹. He is also called Kari untikkadavul since he has devoured the poison which emerged from the ocean as a result of the churning of the ocean by the Devas and Asuras¹⁰. He wields the Mazhu (Pickaxe). He wears Goddess Ganga, crescent moon and Konraigarland¹¹. He mounts on the bull the bull is also engraved in his flag¹². The Asuras who fell on three forts and gave untold misery to the Devas. At the request of the Devas Siva destroyed these forts¹³. Ainkurunooru, patirruppattu, Kalithokai, Akananuru and Purananuru the five of the eight Anthologies have invocation verses in praise of Lord Siva. Scholars attest a heavy antiquity to the worship of Siva in Tamil Nadu¹⁴. Siva's wife Parvati was also worshipped in the Sangam age. Silappathikaram refers to the existence of the worship of several duties side by side in the city of Poompukar and also to the festivals

connected with siva, Shanmuga, Thirumal and Indira¹⁵. For the separation of Siva cult and its development into a distinct sect in the Tamil country, the Nayanmars were mainly instrumented. They were the first to hymn the praise of Siva and to propagate the worship of Siva¹⁶.

The advent of Saivism in the Tamil country was mainly in the form of the Pasupate Saivism. The findings of Linga at Godimallam. Amaravati Bhita etc. in Andhrapradesh suggest that early wave of Pasupatasaivism reached this part of the Peninsula around the second century B.C. The revival of Brahmanism, in the north during the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., Penetrated to extreme south and cause the rise of Siva and Vaishnava Bhakthi cult. Bhakthi movement of Saivism commenced in Kannada country but it reached a great height in TamilNadu. Therefore the Bhakthi cult of SaivaNayanmars also meant to revive the Siva cult of Sangamage¹⁷.

In the religious sphere south excelled the north. Tamil country in the south contributed much for the promotion of modern Hinduism. At one time the onward march of Buddhism and Jainism in Tamil country went unchecked. Saivism that emerged as religious movements from sixth century A.D., Protesting against Buddhism and Jainism formed an essential component of Bhakti movement upto the ninth century A.D. The Nayanmars toured all over the Tamil country visited the shrines of Siva and adored him with ecstatic devotion collected later as Devarams. They emphasized simple devotion and faith as the means of Salvation one and all. Saint Thirugnanasambandar praises Siva who constitutes in himself Brahma, Vishnu and Isan. The Bhakti cult of Nayanmars produced a great upsurge and mass awakening. This resulted the enrichment of the spiritual and moral standards of the life of the people and temple was the centre of this new efflorescence. The first three Nayanmars Appar, Sundarar and Sambandar sung many devotional songs. The Saiva agamas are first mentioned by Sundaramurti and Thirumanthiram of Thirumular of ninth century A.D. is the earliest work to reflect theology of the Agamas. Manikkavasagar who frequently speaks of the Agamas as revealed by Siva and openly expresses his dislike of the Vedanta by which he means the monism of Sankara (788 A.D. to 820 A.D.) Saivism had branch out into different creeds like Kapalika, Kalamuka, Pasupatha and Virasaivism. Kalamuka sect of Saivism became powerful during the eighth and ninth century A.D. The Kalamukas imbibed certain essential features of the Agamas. There is a reference from the inscriptions that Kalamuka Brahmanas of the Saiva sect were found in the north Arcot district in the early part of the tenth century A.D. In the beginning of the eleventh century A.D. in the Aringisura temple at Melpadi in the North Arcot District amateuring of the Lakulisa Pasupatas formed a branch of Kalamuhas¹⁸. Another reference from the records a gift by a certain vinnagar vayiramegan to a Kalamuha Brahmana of sect of Dasapuriyas¹⁹. The Kalattur and Thirovanathkoyil inscriptions mention Gomadattusailarasipandita and Jhanarasi pandita who were the owners of these temples and belonged to the Kalamuha or Lokulisa Pasupatha sect, one of the oldest Sahis sivmas of saivism at the end of twelfth century A.D.²⁰. The Kalamuhas built temples as instructed in the Siva Agamas and added many monastic colleges for higher learning. Hospitals and maternity homes were also founded by Kalamukas for the benefit of the local population. Many mutts in Tamil Nadu were organized by Kalamuhasmonks²¹. Another Saiva sect was the

Kapalika sect. The Kapalika who worshipped Birava wore garlands of Skulls. They too performed animal and human sacrifices and considered woman as avatar of Adisakti.

By tradition and faith Pandyas were great Saivaites. In the Pallava period Saivism enjoyed royal patronage. After the conversion of Mahendravarma I to Saivism religion enjoyed the status of a state religion. The Kings constructed many rock cut temples and structural temples for Siva throughout their Kingdom. They invited and settled the Brahmins in the Tamil country. There was the intermingling of the Vedic deities with Tamil deities. Thus Siva turned into Mahadeva, Muruga to Subramania and Korraivai to Durga²². The age of imperial cholas was the golden age of Saivism siva was worshipped in human and linga forms. The greatest contribution of Raja Raja I was spotting out NambiAndarNambi who was responsible for the recovery of the Devaram hymns from a cellar in the Chidambaram temple. Nambi Andar Nambi compiled the Saiva canon substantially. He arranged eleven books of the Saiva canon. The twelfth Tirumurai was added later on under the imperial cholas, Devaraja cult introduced new form of Saivism which centered on the worship of Linga the formalized phallic symbol of siva, with which the prosperity of the Kingdom was believed to be bound up²³. Linga donated by the king came to be called as the name of the King. Thus Linga donated by the Raja Raja I came to be called as the RajaRajaswara linga²⁴. Reciting the Thiruppadigam hymns in temple was in practice from Parantaka region onwards. Endowments were created for it. RajaRaja I appointed fortyeight Tiruppadigam Vinnappam Seivar and two drummers for singing Devaram hymns. He appointed Devaranayagam, an officer to look in to its proper performance²⁵. Rajendra Chola I appears to have supported the cause of Saivism by going a step further than his father and setting up the images of Some of the famous saivasaints in the temple of RajaRajeswara at Tanjore. A mutt or rest house under the name of Thiruvagaisam was built by Rajendra Chola I at Uyyamkondam Thirumalai. Thus Saivism appears to have gradually grown stronger and stronger under the Patronage of the Chola kings. So that in the beginning of the thirteenth century A.D., a number of Mutts presided over by Saiva Sanyasis spreading their influence over a pretty large portion of Tamil country²⁶.

Conclusion

Two developments in Saivism occurred in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the Tamil country. The first is the development of the Tamil Saivasiddhanta Philosophy based on the Ahamas. The first definite formulation of the Philosophy of the Tamil Saiva Siddhanta was in the work of Meykenda Devar (1234 A.D.) a pious Vellala who lived early in the thirteenth century on the banks of the Pennar river South of Madras. Meykandar wrote SivaGanabodam, the basic text of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy under the impact of Vedantha, which is distinct from the teachings of Saiva Nayanmars. Siva Ganabodam is the first systematic account of Tamil Saivism.

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- 4 Tolkappiam Porulial. 20.
- 5 Ahananuru, 360:6.
- 6 Thirumurugatrupadai, 256, Kalithogai, 81.
- 7 Ahananuru, 181.
- 8 Madurai Kanchi, 443-545.
- 9 Purananuru -6. Kalithogai -2, Ahananuru -81.
- 10 Malaipadukadam. 83 : Purananuru 9:Paripadal 8.
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