

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF KARIKKAD SUBRAHMANYA TEMPLE AND ITS ROLE IN THE CULTURAL HISTORY OF KARIKKAD VILLAGE

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Abstract- Early medieval period (c. 9th – 12th century CE) marked a remarkable change in the socio- cultural and political history of Kerala. The migration of Brahmins and corresponding changes occurred in the worshipping pattern as well as the expansions of agriculture are some of the noteworthy features of this period. Almost all structural temples, both *Saivite* and *Vaishnavite*, were developed in this period. This article focuses on the *Karikkad* temple that developed in connection with the Brahmin settlement of *Eranad. Karikkad*, which was one of the Brahmanical centers in Kerala, has a distinguished place in Kerala History. The architectural features of these temples have shown that they are built in typical Kerala style and belonged to early medieval period.

Keywords: Brahman , namboothiri , Karikkad Subrahmanya temple , Temple rituals , migration.untouchability ,Early Medieval Kerala, Temple Architecture, Eranad.Karikkad, Kooth and koodiyattam etc.

Aim and importance of the study

- To highlight the importance of Brahmanical culture of *Karikkad*.
- To understand the relevance of *Subrahmanya* temple located at *Karikkad*.
- To understand the cultural renaissance occurred in *Karikkad*
- Analyze the significance of annual temple festival called *Karikkad Ulsavam*.

Scope

This is a kind attempt to study the contribution of the *namboothiri* family in the society of *Karikkad*, especially the role of *Subrahmanya* temple. Temple has a prominent place in the context of the spiritual awakening of Kerala. The temple claims a history rich with the spirit of tradition and convention. So that, the present micro level investigations seems to have contributed some fresh insights on the *Karikkad* temple and its rituals etc.

Sources

“Brahman settlements in Kerala” a book written by Kesavan Veluthat, describes brahmin village of *Karikkad*. In “*Keralolpathi*” (*malayalam*) a book written by M.R. Raghava Varier, it has been mentioned about the brahmanical domination, institutions and the origination of temples. In “*Jathi vyavasthithiyum keralavum*” a book written by P.K Balakrishnan, it has been explained all about who is *namboothiri* and ownership of the land. William Logan explains in his book (*Malabar manual*) about the migration of brahmins. K. V .Ayyar, Krishna. In his *Zamurins* of Calicut describes brahmin village of *Karikkad* and its significance etc.

Methodology

In this present study, historical methodology is used for analyzing the source materials and arriving historical inference. For collecting data and source materials, exploratory method has been used. In short, the Methodology adopted in this study can be characterized as critical, analytical, descriptive and interpretative.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis has been tested with the help of the available sources.

1. To explore the contribution of the *namboothiri* family in the society of *Karikkad*.
2. To present a comprehensive feature of the *Karikkad* temple .
3. To unravel the importance of *Karikkad* temple in the context of the spiritual awakening of Kerala.

Research Questions

- Point out the importance of *Karikkad* temple ,which was the center of brahmin migration and formulate the features of *Karikkad* temple.
- In which manner the *Karikkad* Temple rituals established.
- How the *Namboothiris* in *Karikkad* were supporting the changes in society.
- What are the features of the caste system in *Karikkad*.

Introduction

Eranad is one of the seven *Taluks* in the present Malappuram district of Kerala. It was part of the erstwhile Malabar district of colonial India under Madras presidency. In the pre-colonial time (from 13th to 18th century CE) *Eranad* was a political unit under the control of *Zamorins* of Calicut and in the early medieval time (from 9th to 12th century CE) it was one of the fourteen provincial subdivisions called *Nadu* of *Chera* state. Most of the archaic temples of this region belonged to this period. *Karikkad* Temple, also known as *Karikkad Subramanya* Temple, is located around 5 km north of Manjeri in Malappuram District in Kerala. (11°08'43.37" N, 76° 07'15.23" E). *Karikkad* which had rich agricultural land was also center of feudal system. Yet as a result of Renaissance and English education, so many persons of *namboothiri* families emerged up to social and cultural fields. Following this, with agricultural organizations and communist party having risen up, revolts for untouchables to get entrance in to temples and agricultural riots occurred. Therefore, the *Karikkad* has a special place in the National movement in Malabar. Five inscriptions have been discovered from the *Karikkad Subrahmanya* temple. What is being done through this project is studying historical and cultural aspects of *Karikkad* which was one of the brahmin centers in Kerala.

Karikkad Sastha and *Subrahmanya* temple is situated in *Karikkad* village near *Manjeri* town dedicated to *Sastha* and *Subrahmanya*. Inside the *prakara* wall there are two shrines. The circular shrine with *dwitala vimana* is dedicated to *Subrahmanya* and the rectangular shrine with *dwitala vimana* dedicated to *Bala subrahmanya*. Both these temples have separate *Namaskara mandapa* and *Balikkal*. The elliptical shaped *Sastha* temple is located in the outer *pradakshina pada*. This is one of the traditional Brahmin settlements of *Kerala*. The temple have two sets of epigraphs. One belongs to 10th century CE found on the floor of the entrance at *Sastha* temple and the other one of 11th century on right side of the *Upana* of *Subrahmanya* temple. It's believed that the migration of Brahmin began from *kongan* in early centuries. Myth of *Parasurama* is the base of this belief. It was along river shores that they established Brahmins are those people brought in from the dwellings of Aryan people to Kerala and accommodated in 64 villages, 32 were in Kerala. The village of *Karikkad* was believed to be one among the 64 villages created in Kerala by *Parasuram*, Avatar of *Bhagavan* Vishnu. The temple was in old time was an important village of *Yajurvedi* Brahmins. The shrine was built during 10th century AD. Arrival of *namboothiri* Brahmin and their staying here decisively influenced the formation of agricultural society of Kerala. Out of traditional 32 villages, only 23 villages are surviving now. Every village is formed by a temple. *Sree Subrahmanya* temple is the village temple of *namboothiri* in *Karikkad*. The temple has three main deities, two *Subramanian* and one *shasthavu*. This region having vast and rich agricultural lands was the central point of the migration and it was the center of feudal system as well. This description later caused to give this region the name *Karikkad*. In *Karikkad* Brahmin village as many as 150 *illam* were included. Out of which 23 *illams* are very important. In ancient *Karikkad* are included the present places of *Karikkad*, *Manjeri*, *Elangur*, *Punnapala*, *Wandoor*, *Vaniyambhalam*, *Porur*, *Kudaseri*. *Karikkad Sree Subramanya* and *Sree Dharma Sastha* Temple has a prominent place in the context of the spiritual awakening of Kerala.

Brahman-*namboothiri* who migrated to Kerala, greatly influenced the formation of caste system based on agricultural activities and the dissemination of the village society. Over the passage of time when *namboothiri*- brahmins started to perform religious activities all the time, a new class working in their agricultural field emerged. The status of the Brahmins in Kerala is generally known as "*Namboothiri*". Temple committees were included in village assembly they would manage temple related dealings. Brahmin migration and the establishment of their villages have greatly influenced the history of Kerala. It played a major role in shaping an agrarian society of Kerala. It's believed that the migration of brahmin began from *kongan* in early centuries. Myth of *Parasurama* is the base of this belief. They lived in the banks of the river. This region having vast and rich agricultural lands was the central point of the migration of brahmin's from across the state and center of feudal system as well. In this place which was forest area years back, elephants (*kari*) would inhabit densely. So this region was described as a forest such that if an elephant killed somebody, nobody would see him. This description later caused to give this region the name *Karikkad*. *Karikkad*, which is located 4 km away from Manjeri, developed in the fertile areas on the Shore of *Chaliyar* River.

In the edict discovered from *Subrahmanya* temple is mention about land offering. M.G.S Narayanan has read and understood this. It was later during the rule of *Chera* that Brahmin's migration and dominance got momentum. Yet at present temple as well as Brahmin village is on the brink of decay. The *Zamorin* got a ownership of *Karikkad devaswam meledath devaswam* etc. *Zamorin* had support of several feudal rulers. There is a lot of sub temples under *Karikkad* temple. Among them, *Ayyappa* temple in *Kuttiyil*, *Vaniyambalam*, *Wandoor Meleladam*, *Ayyappa* temple at *Punnapala painkulangara* temple, *Ayyappa* temple at *Vellampatta*, *Ornad Siva* temple at *Manjeri*, *Puthrott* temple at *Karuvambram* are very important. It was in *Karikkad*, *Elankur*, *Kodaseri*, *Porur*, *Vaniyambalam*, *Wandoor*, *Punnapala* etc... that *Karikkad* Brahmin families used to live. *Mana* at *Adukkaledath*, *Illam* at *Thamarakulath*, *Pullur Kuttanikatt mana*, *mana* at *Mangottaseri*, *kizhakkedath mana* at *Vailaseri* are the *illams* in *Karikkad*. *Namboothiris* in *Karikkad* are those who follow *Riqveda* and *Yajurveda*.

When Brahmin villages came to existence, the ownership of land and agriculture were controlled by taking the advantage of practical experience of Brahmins in agricultural field. Then caste system and un-touch ability emerged and agricultural field was divided in to various layers. In ancient times the main livelihood of the people was agriculture and related works. Paddy was the main crop. Coco, Areca nut Spinach, Plantain, Cassava, Rubber etc. are cultivated. Systems which existed in Malabar region like "*kanam*" lease, tenancy were in *Karikkad* too. Tenants did not have ownership of the land in which they worked. Instead they were mere preservers of the land. It was paddy which was given to them as wage. Tenants was forced to give rent even when the paddy does not grow. In wake of this, when farmers united and the feeling that all farmers are poor and helpless, got momentum, they demanded right to enter temple be given to us too. The motive behind this was "*Guruvyur sathyagraha*". It was *Chathu Asari*, *Nottu Asan*, *Unnili Kutti*, *Anandhan Chettiyar*, who led the process to get the right to enter the temple besides they have had the support of *P. N. Namboothiri*. Motivated by *P.N Namboothiri* these four persons addressed a letter to the then owner of *Karikkad* press stating that, ' we are going to enter the temple as we have the right to it too. But neither the committee of temple nor *namboothiri* were ready to accept it. On this account though there was a kind of possibility for a fight

between lower caste people and aristocratic people but it didn't end up in fight due to the emergence of musical drama in *Karikkad*.

As tenants got the ownership of the land as result of the land reform bill, became owners and tenants at a time. The tenants who were set free made the lands they got highly cultivatable field. Having switched from the life of having to give intersects and debt, they began to live a new life free of having to give rent. As a result of agricultural organization and labor unions efforts the agricultural production increased and yet there were protest demanding surplus land be given to landless people in order for the government to fix limitations to lands possessed by landlords. *Namboothiris* in *Karikkad* were supporting the changes in society. They worked hard to reform the caste of *namboothiri* itself. Both *P.N Namboothiri* born to a conventional *namboothiri* family and *Nottu Asan* born to a lower caste worked together against the social evils like un-touch ability. Compared with other places, the presence of caste system in *Karikkad* was very low. In the literature of *Mushika* dynasty who ruled from 9th century up to 11th century, there is an indication about drama in lines regarding the erection of *Karikkad* temple. Three sets of *Vattezhuthu* inscriptions are seen on *Jagati* and *Kumuda* datable to 11th century CE Including two *Subramanya* idols and one idol of *Ayyappa*, *Karikkad* temple is comprising of three shrines. It was three *Mushika* dynasty rulers who constructed it. According to the myth of *Subrahmanya* temple located at *Karikkad* idol of *Subrahmanya* had been installed 2500 years ago. It was *Agasthya Maharshi* who installed the idol close to the confluence of rivers of *Kaveri* and *Bavani* in *Tamilnadu*. In the mean while, there had been great wars among some kings lasting for years. People who were devotional to temple took the idol and made their way to were *Karikkad* temple is located at now. Thus they installed it there in with the help of *mussat*, who was the important personality in temple committee. But there is no historical evidence available to support it. At the time of *Mysure* ruler's invasion, several temples were attacked. It was based on the assumption that temple was the source of money. That was why temples were attacked. Though there is no evidence that the Army of *Tippu* attacked temples but temples have to be reestablished after their invasion and a new idol installed. At present *Subrahmanya* temple is famous that it has three idols installed inside. Two of them are of *Subrahmanya* and remaining one is of *Ayyappa*. In the beginning the temple was controlled by *Namboothiri* families.

This temple was the center of brahmin migration. The temple was under governance of general body it comprised of brahmins as its members. They were the trustee of properties under the temple. They are known as *Uralar*. All brahmin families were member of the general body and took part in taking decisive decisions. Their collective property was temples. It was brahmin who protected and preserved the lands owned by brahmins and the temple. It was daily dealings and other things related to temple that was discussed at meeting being called by elder person of the family. Elder person of each family were member of the council too. In the council the discussion was about the dealings of temple. At present such meetings are held under the leadership of *Subrahmanya namboothiripad* of *Kidangazhi mana*. Responsibility to preserve temple was on '*Uvaychans*' *Pothuval*, *Vanyan*, *Varasyar*. Although there are two *Subrahmanya* idols in Idol of *Ayyappa* was installed westwards and *Sreekovil* was built in form of elephant's backside. It has two bases. In the floor, *Ayyappa*'s idol was installed and *Bhagavathi* was installed on north side. Besides on southern side, the idol of *Ganapathi* was also placed. One *Nalambalam* for two *Subrahmanya*'s *sreekovils* and special one for *Shasthavu* are located at *Karikkad* temple. These three gods have equal significance. Three flag hoisting staffs are situated in front of *Sreekovil* in the premise of temple. One pond is located on north – east corner of the temple. It was from this pond that the idol of *Subrahmanya* happened to get found out. Daily worshipping is performed for each of three gods here in *Karikkad* temple.

The annual temple festival called *Karikkad Ulsavam* is usually held during the month of January or February. With regard to the *Subrahmanya* the important worshipping is the "*Shashti pooja*". It's in months based on lunar calendar that all the *Shashti* worshipping, the purpose of which is to drive away the sufferings and difficulties, are carried out. It's on first Monday in every months based on *malayalam* months is also very important. *Kooth* and *koodiyattam* are performed in the month of *kanni*. The important ritual in the month of '*Vrikschika*' is the '*Chuttu vilakk*'. It's in the month of '*Makara*' that the most important rituals are carried out. Birthday of *Subrahmanya* is celebrated on the day of '*Pooyam*', in the month of '*Makara*'. The festival begins 8 days before *Subrahmanya*'s birth day by hoisting flag in front of *Sreekovil* of the aforesaid three gods. *Ganapathi homa* , *Bhagavathi seva*, *Bhagavatha Saphaha* recitation of *Ramayana* are performed in the month of *Karkkidaka*. The *Karikkad* library was founded on 8th January, 1932. The library which was formed by both communist party and social activist in name of '*Gramodharana Sangam*' was renamed by *P.N Panikkar* who is the founder of movement for library as '*Gramam seva samithi grandhasala*'. Now *M.S Sindhuserve* as librarian and *Mr. Sudheesh* as the secretary. Library meeting is called every Sundays in every month at present there are 9239 books. *Kalasa* set up in 1959 operates under the library. Though in the beginning, the troupe and library operated in one building, later activities of troupe began operate in hose. At present *Mr. Sudheesh* serves as president and *Mr. Sreejith* has secretary.

CONCLUSION

Brahmin migration and establishment of their villages have greatly influenced the History of Kerala. History of *Karikkad* village is located 4 km away from *Manjeri*, in *Malappuram* district. It is one of the 32 brahmin villages in Kerala established by Aryans. It developed in the fertile areas on the Shore of *Chaliyar* River. A very important fact about the brahmin settlements in Kerala is that they were essentially temple-centered and that the temple was synonymous with the brahmin settlement and vice-versa. *Karikkad* has a distinguished place for having changed in to a society free of caste system, un -touch ability, excommunication and so on. People who used to perform various works till then gradually began to pick up professions based on caste system under the brahmanical domination. Though old caste system faded away the diversity of castes still exists as a proof for History. Every village is formed by a temple. *Sree Subrahmanya* temple is the village temple of *namboothiri* in *Karikkad*. The temple has three main deities. The trusteeship of the temple was on 27 brahmin *namboothiri* families. Yet at present the temples operates under the control of 23 families.

The activities of *Yogakshemasabha* under *V.T. Bhattathiripadu* influenced *namboothiri* and other people and they crafted their own part in social changes.

Namboothiri's began to come forward against the social malpractices as result of education and progressive movements. From within *namboothiri* families themselves, several protests and revolts emerged. Un-touch ability, temple entry for lower caste and land before were the prominent ones. Land reform bill of 1959 and its impacts were reflected in *Karikkad* too. As result of bill passed in 1970, feudalism was put to rest and subsequently tenants took the ownership of several lands. Changes occurred in production field of agriculture can be seen in *Karikkad* which was center for paddy cultivation. Shift from paddy cultivation to commercial crops like rubber is one of the examples. This temple claims a history rich with the spirit of tradition and convention; radiant with the glitters of culture and heritage, dating back to early decades of the Tenth century according to a Sanskrit classic *Mooshikapurana* written in the eleventh century. The *Eshwaraseva* observed for twelve days in the month of *Kanni* is another occasion for entertainment and enlightenment. Temple rituals including Special *Poojas*, *Bhajans* etc will be conducted during the festival. The temple will be decorated with flowers coconut leaves etc. *Chendamelam* is a percussion music event conducted during the festival.

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