

The Impact Of Kalamukhas On Veera Saivism In Medieval South India

M.Shankara Narayana
M.A., M.Phil.,
History, Culture & Archaeology
P.S.T.U, Srisailem Campus 518101

Date of Submission: 29-02-2024

Date of Acceptance: 09-03-2024

‘Saivism’ is an ancient faith of India, centred round the name of Saiva as the supreme God. The worship of Siva in the form of lingam is also very old.

Saivism has been a popular religion throughout the history of Medieval South India. The Chief Sects of Saivism which Prevailed in Karnataka were the Pasupatha, Lakulisa, the Kalamukha, the Kapalika and Veera Saivas. They enriched the South Indian Culture. After the 12th century Veera Saivism with its new principles attracted the masses. In due course, other saiva sects in general and Kalamukhas in particular, probably mingled with Veera Saivism.⁽¹⁾

The Kalamukhas were prevalent in South India from the 7th, to the 11th century. This is one of the most important saiva sects and did valuable service in uplifting the People. In the field of Education. Besides, the spread of Saiva philosophy they were, the heads of temples and mathas and maintained these institutions in very high order. The Kalamukha acharyas with their scholarship, simplicity and selfless service, had close relations with the people. They had made Saivism popular religion through their monasteries, for there was a monastic order rather than a religious sect.⁽²⁾

The Veera Saivas also played a vital role in the history of South India. The origin and growth of Veera Saiva mathas and their contribution to Indian culture is to be studied.⁽³⁾ Their activities were controlled and guided by the mathas and their respective acharyas. It would not be a mistake to say that history of Veera Saiva mathas is practically the history of Veera Saivism. They were the Custodians and bearers of the banners of Veera Saiva culture. All religious rules and regulations were set by the mathas for the guidance of their followers, and even education was imparted by them.

The Mathas also acted as protectors of their followers, moral integrity and discipline, deep scholarship, simple life and high thinking made these institutions not only popular but the very life force of the Veera Saivas. These mathas were also centres for expression of political opinion and thought for much of it is the contribution of the Kalamukhas.

The reformation movement of Veera Saivism in the 12th century was a period of great religious ferment in Andhra and also Karnataka. The revival and growth of this religion was the major event of the period. It was in this period that the Saiva Saranas gave great impetus to a liberal and reformist movement. They stood for equality and laid stress on the moral life, with implicit faith in the worship of God Siva. (istalinga)

The movement gave fillip to education in various ways. A great impetus to Kannada was given. They turned their religious institutions into educational centres and Jangamas into instructors of both, secular and sacred knowledge. They emphasized the dignity of labour. They considered it a sin to live on the earnings of others, the only exception being the priests or Jangamas.⁽⁴⁾

The Important development of this age was the matha in full form. The Veera Saivas made it an agency by which they tried to broadcast their teachings, Veera Saiva mathas served the cause of religion, social reform and education at one and same time. The earlier Saiva mathas, especially those of the Kalamukhas, appear to have now come under the control of the Veera Saivas. It would be interesting to note how and when the Kalamukha mathas were absorbed into the Veera Saiva fold and by became one with them.

1) Kalamukhas and Veera Saivas were both worshippers of Siva in the form of linga. The custom of wearing the linga on the body was in practice before Basava. A record dated 1164 AD, states that Kedara Sakti, the acharya asserts that whose sets up but one linga, obtains a myriad - fold all the merit described in the agamas.⁽⁵⁾ It is also believed that the Veera Saivas had their lingadharana from Kalamukha gurus. The acharyas of Kalamukha mathas have been very orthodox and they believed in the Varnasrama system. But the reformed Veera Saivas were openly hostile to caste and other social distinctions. Though the Kalamukha acharyas had the privilege of

performing the lingadharana ceremony of the Veerasaivas, they could take food in the houses.⁽⁶⁾ The reformers protested against this and boycotted the Kalamukha gurus, put the Jangamas in their place and had the lingadharana from the latter. Through they condemned the attitude of these Kalamukhagurus, they did not cut off all relations with them. But they gave equal status to both Guru and Jangama.

The organizations of religious institutions called matha in a systematised manner by the Kalamukhas was copied and followed by the Veerasaivas. But the Kalamukhas gave greater importance to the spread of education rather than religion. They taught only Sanskrit and they attracted a few people of the higher classes. Another important feature of the Kalamukha organization was that they were usually attached to some temples. The principles of five Veerasaivamathas were also attached to five famous temples. One revolutionary change that the Veerasaivas effected was that they built mathas in almost every village, and an equally important innovation was that they made Telugu the medium of instruction. They made the mathas the Pivotal Centre of religion Culture education and economy. Thus, they become very popular with masses and also overshadowed the few strong Kalamukhamathas with their missionary zeal and sacrifice. To stabilize and strengthen the power of their religion, they made the matha the source of inspiration and instruction.

The Priests of the Veerasaivas are called Jangamas, and old term religious consciousness of the public like the Buddhist Bhikkhus, they were always on tour thought their life. Their Life was dedicated to the promotion of religion, philosophy. and literature. Kalamukha acharyas were also called Jangamas. We can quote a number of inscriptions, where Kalamukha acharyas called Jangamas. A record of 1189 A.D from Hombal describes the donor a Kalamukha ascetic named Rudra' Sakthi, as a Jangama.⁽⁷⁾ Another grant from the Jagadisvara temple at Munavalli in 1252 A.D, describes the Kalamukha acharya, Sarvasvaradeva as a Jangama - Lingavatara and an incarnation of a moving linga.⁽⁸⁾ In Veerasaiva literature the relation between the guru and the Jangamas, the Jangamas and the Saranas are not altogether clear. But the Jangamas were organised even earlier than the 12th century AD. Hence, We can conclude that the Veerasaiva Jangamas were a new edition of the early Kalamukha Jangamas.⁽⁹⁾

The important Kalamukha centres in Andhra, Srisailam, and Kedara and in Karnataka they were Huli, Balligave, Asagode, Chaduragola etc. Now almost all the temples and mathas controlled by the Kalamukhas are under the control of Veerasaivas. Hence, we can assume that the Kalamukhas were submerged by the new force to Veerasaivism. We get reference to some Kalamukha acharyas upto the 14th century and from the beginning of 15th century, these acharyas disappeared and their mathas became centres of Veera Saivism.

Another important deduction, we have made in our studies is that the importance of gurus and the Jangamas among the Veerasaivas is due to the interaction between the old Kalamukha and reformed Veerasaiva religion.

we have already mentioned that the acharyas of the Kalamukhas were great scholars and commenced respect and response from all sections of People; and that the Veerasaivas had their initiation from either saiva acharyas in general and the Kalamukha acharyas in particular. These were called gurus. But Basava and the other sivasaranas protested against the activities of these gurus, as did not take food in their houses and did not mix with the masses. They were followers and protectors of the Sanskrit language and literature. The fact that there are no works of these acharyas in Kannada, may also be due to the fact that many of their leaders were from outside of Karnataka. The Saiva Saranas made Kannada their medium of teaching and the Jangamas of their gurus for initiation. But one thing is to be noted here, that the gurus of the old society were not neglected, they were also given due importance.

Thus, both Gurus and Jangama occupied a significant place in Veerasaiva Society. It is also said that we should not distinguish between the two, they are the same when the Kalamukha acharyas were losing their hold, they realised their mistake and appear to have made compromise with Veera Saivism, thus slowly but steadily, they began to teach in Kannada and embraced the new principles in toto. Their acharyas become Veerasaivagurus and their mathas became Veera Saivamathas, old elements, may have formed the back ground of the guru - vargamathas and the new elements may have formed the basis for the viraktamathas. But there is no difference or distinction between the gurus and the Jangama. Hence, among Veerasaivas these two offices are significant.⁽¹⁰⁾

Brahmacharya (Celibacy) was a common rule among both these Saiva sects. They were great scholars, their main aim was to spread spiritual education and protect the Dharma. Another important factor of similarity is that the succession to the acharya seat was not and is not hereditary (except in the Pubravarga Pattadaguru vargamathas). The selection was based on merit and Scholarship.

These factors which we find in our literature and in Inscriptions to prove how the new reformation movement of the Veera Saivas was influenced by the earlier Saiva sects in general and by the Kalamukhas-Pasupathain Particular. The subject needs further research and study. However, we conclude that the Kalamukhas influence in the revived Veera Saivism is more than as usually believed; or may be the Kalamukhas were submerged completely in Veerasaiva sect.

References :

- [1]. Epigraphiacarnatica, VII. SK. 94, 98, 107.
- [2]. The Origin Of The Monastic Order Is Referred To The Agamas. The Agamas Are Great Source To Bothkalamukhas And Veerasaivas.
- [3]. The Original Founder Of Panchapithasare Located Through Outindia (Kedara And Kasi In Uttar Pradesh, Srisailam In Andhra Pradesh, UjjaniAnd Balehonnur Now In Karnataka. The Acharyas Of These Five Mathas Are Gothra Purushas And They Have Sakthamathas Throughout South India.
- [4]. Nandimath, SC,Hand Book, P.22.
- [5]. Epigraphiacarnatica. VII. SK. 100.
- [6]. Basavaraju, L. Sivadasa Gitanjali; P-4.
- [7]. Nandimath, SC,Hand Book, P-56.
- [8]. South Indian Inscriptions. XV. PP 152,153
- [9]. David N. Laorenzen, The Kapalikhas And Kalamukhas PP171-172
- [10]. The Use Of Danda, Kamandalu Etc. By The Veerasaiva Acharyas May Also Have Been The Features Of The Kalamukha Acharyas. The Kalamukha Acharyas Described In The Inscriptions As Holding Lakula Or Dandain Hand. The Veera Saiva Acharyas Also Hold Danda And Kamandalalu In Their Hands.