HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF KARIKKAD SUBRAHMANIYA 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 Karikkat 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, Karikkat, 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 Karikkadand 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, 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 dwitsa vimana is dedicated to Subrahmanya and the rectangular shrine with dwitata 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 and 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 temple of 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, Kodaseri. Karikkad Sree Subrahmanya 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 melethad 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 Meledamad, Ayyappa temple at Punnapala painkulangara temple, Ayyappa temple at Vellampatta, Ornad Siva temple at Manjeri, Pathrot 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 Adakkeledath, Illam at Thamarakulath,Pullur Kuttanikkatt 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 untouch 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 “Guruyur satyyagraha”. It was Chathu Asari, Notti Asan, Ummili Kutti, Anandan 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 Notta Anan 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 Taminadu. 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 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 Uradar. 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 Kidangachi mana. Responsibility to preserve temple was on ‘Uvachans ‘ Potluval, Vanay, Varasay. 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 worshiping 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 “Shashhti pooja”. It’s in months based on lunar calendar that all the Shashhti 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. Koothu and koodyattam are performed in the month of kanni. The important ritual in the month of ‘Vrikschaka’ 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, Bhagavathi Sapthaha recitation of Ramayana are performed inthe month of Karkkidaktha. The Karikkad library was founded on 8th January, 1932. The library which was formed by both communists and social activist in name of ‘Gromodharana Sangam’ was renamed by P.N Panikkar who is the founder of movement for library as ‘Grama Seva Samithi grandhasala’. Now M.S Sindhuserves as librarian and Mr. Sudheesh as the secretary. Library meeting is called every Sundays in every month at present there are 9239 books. Kalasamithi 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. Bhattachiripadu 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.

REFERENCES: