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A STUDY OF HINDU-MUSLIM SYNTHESIS CENTERS IN KALABURGI



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ABSTRACT

The present paper will look into the shared history the Hindu Muslim synthetic centers in Kalaburgi. It will look at the role played by the religious leaders- the Sufis and the Veerashaiva Saints who promulgated the ideas of unity, equality, harmony and importantly brotherhood.

KEYWORDS : *Hindu-Muslim Synthesis Centers , shared history , harmony and importantly brotherhood.*

INTRODUCTION

Kalaburgi is a land of multitudes, it has many languages, people of different religion, caste, creed and tribes as evidenced by historical documents and the regional history¹. The different groups have maintained a harmonious relationship, which was due to the efforts of social-religious reformers who tried to bridge the gaps between these numerous groups through their religious teachings. Islam as a religious force became prominent in the region during the 14th century, due to the rule of the Bahamani Kingdom. The people who practiced Islam maintained a healthy cooperative relationship with the majority community², the Hindus. Such a healthy relationship can seldom be found in the rest of India. Kalaburgi is land of these Hindu Muslim synthetic centers, which preached cooperation, equality, harmony and mutual respect.

The rulers of the region, irrespective of the religion they belonged to, upheld the principle of religious equality, thus creating a healthy atmosphere for the synthetic unity between the various communities and sects. The socio-religious movement led by the Veerashaiva saint Basaweshwara, during the 12th century heralded a new era, liberating religion from the Bhraminical practices, superstitions and caste barriers. Religious ideas were promulgated through the use of accessible regional tongue, a departure from the forced use of Sanskrit by the Brahmins. The Shivasharana Saints who travelled across the region to propagate the ideas of Basaweshwara used a new medium to transfer the ideas.³ They used the form, the 'Vachanas', which was verse written in simple language that even a layman could understand, but was full of philosophical implications.

Earlier to Basaweshwara, the Shivasharanas were influenced by Kesiraja of Kondaguli who was a minister under Vikramaditya VI. The same tradition was continued in a renewed form in the 17th-18th century by the proponents of Veershaiva philosophy. In the 13th century, South India came into

contact with Islam. Prior contacts in the coastal region of South India were not influential, because they were limited to just trade. In the 14th century the Bahamanis established their kingdom in Kalaburgi. Muslim political authority and religion were thus firmly established in the region. The Rulers of the Bahamani Sultanate understood the importance of establishing harmonious relationship with the majority religion of the region. Hence efforts were made to maintain peace and educate people about religious equality. In order to do this the Bahamani rulers brought in the Sufi leaders who propagated religious equality and were revered by both the Hindus and Muslims for their preachings. The Veerashiava religious leaders, who had preached about equality and self attainment through the vachanas, also played an important role in creating the synthetic structures of Hindu-Muslim unity. Prominent among the numerous saints are, Kodekal Basavanna, Tinthani Monappa, Savalagi Shivalingeshwara, Khwaja Bande Nawaz, and Kalaburgi Sharanabasaveshwara. The present paper will look into the contributions made by these saints and the role played by their Mathas, Dasohas and Dargas in creating a harmonious region.

Major figures in the movement

a. Kodekal Basavanna

Kodekal Basavanna's contribution towards the unity of Hindu-Muslim community is great. His monastery, located in Surpur Tq, Kalaburgi Dist., is home to the Hindu-Muslim amity. He continued the Basavadi tradition of maintaining good relationships with people of other religions. In a poem in one of the books written in the 16th century "Nandiaagamaaleele", he was called as an incarnation of both Mohammed Paigambar and Ganesha⁴. It is unique for a Hindu religious leader to be called by Muslim name. A temple built in Indo-Sarcenic style in Kodekal in the site where we can see the unity among the Hindu and Muslims. The temple is site of synthesis between the two communities, the hindus refer it as the "Samadhi", a holy place revered and prayed at, reverbating with the holy chant " Kodekal Basavanna Maharaj ki jai", the Muslims on the other hand offer prayers and chant "Mohammad Paigambar ki Dostara ho din". The Hindus offer Maladi (a local delicacy) as prasadam, and Muslims offer sugar as offerings to the saint. This clearly depicts that Kodekal is the center of Hindu Muslim unity. Within the temple, outside the Samadhi we find a brass and silver plate on which are inscribed the vachanas of Basavanna, within the tomb, there is a hanging glass vase on which is inscribed " La ilahi illallah Muhammad rasulallah". This is symbolic of the unity and the existence of two religions side by side within a single religious structure. The dress worn by Kodekal Basavanna was in Mohemaddan style and his footwear was unique, he wore a shoe in one leg and a Sandal/Chapal in other leg. Hence we can say that his dressing also incorporated his religious teachings of unity. In conclusion we can say that Kodekal Basavanna was one of the first saints in the Kalaburgi region to preach Hindu Muslim unity through his vachanas and lifestyle, and he became a symbol of religious unity even after his death which is seen by the religious harmony present at the Samadhi.

b. Tinthani Monappayya

Tinthani Monappayya was prominent among all the disciples of Kodekal Basavanna, and he learnt the preachings of unity and harmony through his master. He was born, at Gonal village in Surpur Tq of the present Yadagiri Dist., in a Vishwakarma family. There is story regarding the birth of Monappayya, there was a great sufi saint Khwaja Ameenuddin in the region revered by all, and after the sufi dies it is said that monappayya was born. Hence he was regarded by many as the reincarnation of the sufi saint. He dedicated his whole life to the upliftment of the poor and maintaining a harmonious relationship between the two religious communities.

His primary religious philosophy was that all Human beings are one, irrespective of their caste, creed, tribe or religion, and he strived to inculcate these beliefs among his followers and the common people. He preached the veerashaiva philosophy in such a way that it could be followed by both the Hindus and Muslims. He gave a call to all the human beings to live together, and further added that the caste and creeds are artificial in nature, created by man.⁵ On the occasion of full moon day falling in february month annual jatra celebrations are held. Both the hindu panchala community and the Muslims celebrate it with equal interest and piety. The devotees chant the vachanas of Monapayya during the jatra. It is during this period that a procession is held wherein the items used by Monapayya, an earthen vessel and an axe are paraded in a palanquin on the shoulders of the devotees. During the procession the palanquin is preceded by Muslim devotees who lead it and chant "deen" and play "alahi" dance⁶. During the time of pooja the priest of the temple chants the following mantra which has elements of both Hindu and Muslim religious figures:

"Om eklakh ainsai Hajar
Pancho Paigambar maunaddin
Jita peer Paigambar maunaddin
Kashipati Gangadhar Har Har Mahadev "

c. Saavalagi Shivalingeshwara

The village Saavalagi is located 20kms away to the west of kalburgi city. Here the temple dedicated to saint shivalingeshwara is very famous visited by people from distant places like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. This temple is also a center for synthesis among the two religions. Shiivalingeshwara was born in 1645 AD at Kollur Village of Kalaburgi taluk⁷. His father was Lingabasappa Gowda and Mother was Malamma. The couple were devote followers of Veerashaivism. Lingabasappa was a large landlord, owning 175 acres and respected by the surrounding villages. During his childhood Shivalingeshwara showed interest towards meditation, Performing Pujas and other religious activities. He had great compassion towards the poor and the lower strata of the society. During the famine which hit the region, unable to bear the hunger which he saw all around him young shivalingeshwara against the wishes of his father distributed foodgrains among the hungry. His father became angry at his act and chided him and forced him to leave the home.

After leaving the shelter of the home, shiubvalingesjwara went to saavalagi village which was 17 kms away from Kollur Village. Siddeshwara of Shivapura Village, Abzalpur Taluk took the young boy under his care and became his spiritual mentor. He taught him the Eight Commandments towards spiritual attainment. The political system during this time was dominated by the muslim rulers. Shivalingeshwara felt that the veerashiva religion was under threat from the Mohemeddan religion and its practices. Shivalingeshwara was not against Moihemaddan religion or practices but wanted the veerashaiva religion to maintain its unique identity without domanitaion by any other community or religion. Hence he developed friendly relationship with the sufi saints, important among them was Khwaja Bande Nawaz of Kalburgi, who was known for his liberal attitude towards other religions. Khwaja Bande Nawaz invited shivalingeshwara as a guest to the annual Urs at Kalaburgi. Shivalingeshwara as a guest to the Urs made the following offerings, "shamala", "shaili" and "shilemani". This helped foster the relationship between the two communities, creating both mutual respect and understanding.

Shivilaingeshwars travelled to the following regions, in order to propagate his religious teachings of unity and amicability, Surpur Samsthana, Bijapur, Dharwad, Belgavi, Maharashtra, Andhra

Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Sultan Sikandar Adil Shah who was impressed by the humanitarian works taken by the saint and his teachings of Religious harmony, donated 33 villages to Shivalingeshwara for the maintenance and upkeep of the Mathas. It is believed that he established 360 mathas in Karnataka, Telangana, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu⁸. It is said that the monasteries/ mathas established by Shivalingeshwara had total land holdings of about 10,000 acres. The mathas built by Shivalingeshwara are in the Indo-Saracenic style, which indicate the importance of synthesis between the two cultures and religions. The Mathas from the outside would look like a Mughal structure, but once you enter it, it would be Hindu religious structure.

He also built a matha at Savalgi near Ghataprabha in Gokak Tq. where he underwent "nirvikalpa Samadhi" (live burial) in 1745 AD. The Moharram festival is celebrated in a unique manner in Savalgi village, because it is heavily influenced by Hindu styles. In the evening the Muslim devotees along with Hindu devotees take the "panjas" and parade them in a procession. Once the procession ends, in the following morning the "panjas" are brought to the Shivalingeshwara Matha, here it is said that Shivalingeshwara gives them permission to end the procession and disperse. Such a kind of Moharram celebration fosters unity and brotherhood among the Hindus and Muslims⁹. Muslim devotees of the Shivalingeshwara matha from far off places travel to Shivalingeshwara matha, especially during the "Jatra" (Car Festival). At the time of car festival the devotees chant "Bande Nawaz dostara Ki-ho din" after this the people start to pull the car (ratha). Even today, if we visit the matha, we will see that the bodyguard of the pontiff of the matha is a Muslim by name Moinuddin. After enquiry, Moinuddin said that he is following a tradition which dates back to Shivalingeshwara himself. After being established in between 1645 AD- 1745 AD¹⁰, the various Shivalingeshwara Mathas have been instilling the ideas of brotherhood and amicability among the masses, which in the present world has become very essential.

d. Sharanabasaveshwara

Another important centre of religious harmony in Kalburgi region is the Sharanabasaveshwara temple. Sharanabasaveshwara was born in 1746¹¹ in Aralagundagi in Jewargi taluka of Kalburgi Dist. His parents were Malkappa and Sangamma, who were staunch followers of Veerashaivism. Sharanabasaveshwara continued the religious policy of Shivalingeshwara in the 18th and 19th century, he looked at the people of other religion with love and respect¹².

There is a historical anecdote which talks about the respect he had for other religions. It is said that once he went to visit the Khwaja Bande Nawaz Darga. But, on account of being a Hindu he is denied admission into the dargah. The door is locked in front of him. At this point there is a miracle, wherein Sharanabasaveshwara is found to have entered the dargah and meeting the pontiff head of the Dargah. The people guarding the entrance are flabbergasted, they then realize that Sharanabasaveshwara was no ordinary citizen but a saint. Sharanabasaveshwara after performing the miracle said to the Muslims guardians the following:

"Bande Nawaz ni tande yallade bere
Yendu bhavisalagadendu kondadini
Sandehadim sharana gondisutalavaru
Koun Hindu Mussalman Kaun
Yendu Saleha padi navendendigivara nange
Hindenu mundenu handinayijanma nijavendaru bhaktiyinda"¹³

Other than this Sharanabasaveshwara conducted numerous programmes to build cordial

relationship between Hindus and Muslims in the region. Even to this day, muslims remember Sharanabasaveshwara as the man who worked for development of both Muslims and Hindus, and due to the efforts of the saint, till date in the region Hindus and Muslims live peacefully together.

e. Khwaja Bande Nawaz

Khwaja Bande Nawaz Dargah is yet another important center of religious harmony in the region. Mohammad bin Tuglaq shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, and in 1346 his viceroy Allaudin Bahamnai revolted against him and declared independence in the areas he governed for the king, and established his own kingdom at Kalaburgi in 1347 AD. At the request of Ahmed Shah Bahamani the great sufi saint Khwaja Bande Nawaz came to Kalaburgi from Daulatabad. Khwaja Bande Nawaz was a disciple of the great Sufi saint Naseeruddin Chisti of Delhi. Naseeruddin Chisti was called as the "chirag (Lamp) of Delhi". Khwaja Bande Nawaz worked for the spiritual betterment of the people and the region, later circumstances forced him to take part in the political acts of the Bahamani Kingdom. Khwaja Bande Nawaz treated the Hindus as equals, therefore he was also called as "Kesava Chaitanya". He had good relations with the practitioners of the "natha" tradition of Veerashaivism. The existence of a diety of Hindu Saint Sidapayya in the Dargah premises symbolizes the religious harmony that was practiced at that time¹⁴. The tradition of religious equality and treating the Hindus with respect continued with the later sufi saints in dargah. The 17th and 18th Walis or Pontiff Head of the Bande Nawaz Darga were the contemporaries of savalagi Shivalingeshwara and Sharanabasaveshwara respectively. Till today the pontiff head of the Bande Nawaz Darga maintain harmonious relationship with the Hindi Temples and Monastries as a tradition. The invitation to savalagi Shivalingeshwara by the 17th Wali of the Dargah to participate the Urs symbolizes¹⁵ the importance given to the Hindu saints and the idea of brotherhood that they had.

CONCLUSION

Kalburgi region is noted for the great culture and tradition since ancient times. In the ancient times we find that the people of various sects like, Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Jainas, Boudha and Veerashivas existed peacefully together in an atmosphere of peace and equality. Jaina and Budhist relics dating back to king Ashoka can be found in the region. We see Jaina temples in many villages, these are evidence of the fact that all the people were living harmoniously.

During the medieval period Islam was firmly rooted with the establishment of Bahamani Kingdom. Initially there was of sense of mistrust, the feeling of an outsider coming to rule to majority. The muslim leaders understood the importance of maintaining peaceful relationships with the local people, who were mainly Hindus. Hence for this reason, the Sufi saints were brought to Kalaburgi to develop the relationship with the Hindus and develop cooperative atmosphere. Therefore we don't find any mention of any rebellion against the outsider Muslim kings by the majority Hindus of the region.

During the 14th -15th century we find that Kodekall Basavanna preaching the people through his vachanas the importance of equality and brotherhood with people of other religions. In the 15th-16th century Tinthani Monapayya, a disciple of Kodekall Basavanna, continued the religious ideologies of his master, and highlighted the importance of Humanity among the people. The 17th- 18th century witnessed another important Veerashaiva saint, Savalgi Shivalingeshwara, who also preached the religious philosophy of Kodekall Basavanna and Tinthani Monappa along with developing friendship with the Walis of the Dargah. Savalagi Shivalingeshwara understood the importance of cooperation and brotherhood among the Hindus and Muslims. With royal endowments and gifts of villages and

establishment of mathas spread throughout Karnataka and neighbouring states, Shivalingeshwara took his ideas to the masses. The preachings of Shivalingeshwara are the remedy to todays problems that are brewing up between people of different religion and communities.

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