

AYYA VAIKUNDAR - THE SOCIAL REFORMER

Anish T.R

Reg No: 18213151081003

Research Scholar

Department of History

S.T.Hindu College, Nagercoil.

Affiliated in Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli

Email: anishtrb@gmail.com

Dr. M. Shyla kumarai

Assistant professor

Department of History

S.T.Hindu College, Nagercoil.

Affiliated in Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli

Email : shyla051972@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The article states about the social reformer, grant humanist and pioneer of Indian renaissance Ayya Vaikundar. His famous slogan was “ONE CASTE, ONE RELIGION, ONE CLAN, ONE WORLD, ONE GOD” which makes all caste people to feel equality, he spread Ayya cult with his disciples. His main disciples are Dharma cheedar, Bheeman cheedar, Arjunan cheedar, Nakulan cheedar, Sahadevan cheedar. Ayya started Annadhanam which is the important dharma. As he told he attained nirvana on 2nd June 1891, many prophecies of Ayya became reality. The divine words of Ayya make the downtrodden people to have an independent and fearless life, a lotus carrying a flame is the symbol of Ayya vazhi, the detailed work of Ayya Vaikundar is stated in this article.

Key words: Ayya Vaikundar, Samathwa Samajam, Nizhal Thangals, Casteism, Swamithoppu.

INTRODUCTION

In 19th century, there was casteism, the upper class people treated lower class people as a slave, the casteism was defined by government, higher caste include Tamil Brahmins, Malayala Brahmins (Namboodiries, Kshathriyas, Nairs) low caste are Adi Dravidar, Alavan,

Arayan, Bharatar, Chackravar, Chakkiliyan, Chavalakkaran, Ezhavan, Ezhaaratti, Kaakkaalan, Kaniyan, Kaarari, Kuravan, Marakkan, Maravan, Mukkaran, Nadar, Nulayan, Palan, Panan, Panikkan, Paravan, Parayan, Pulayan, Vaalan, Velan, Vetan among these all low caste Nadars had faced a lot. More taxes were receiving from Nadars, they work for government and high caste peoples, but they won't pay wages for nadar communities, this was termed as oozhiam, the low caste communities faced social restriction's, religious restrictions and economic restriction, some of social restrictions faced by low caste peoples are discussed here, the low caste group Nadars are not allowed to go near to Brahmins or Nairs, they should maintain a 36 feet distance from Brahmin where as 12 feet distance from Nairs, if they violate this rule they can be killed immediately.

Woman's are not allowed to wear ornaments and have nice cloths if they wanted to do such things means they must pay tax and use it, for both male and female one common rule was, they won't dress above waist and below knee, if the rules were violated by the low caste people means, they will be tortured by higher communities, the needy uses such as using umbrella, wearing cheppals also restricted for low caste people, apart from this, during marriage function they are not allowed to decorate marriage hall. They have no rights to own vehicle (or) cow and they should not carry water on waist, instead they should carry on head (or) right (or) left hand.

Religious restriction was also made for low caste people in worshipping. The Gods Siva, Vishnu, Brahma were considered as high caste communities God, and the other Gods like, Veerabadran, Irulan, Sudalai madan, Bhadrakali, Mutharamman are low caste people Gods.

In poojas also there is inequality for high caste God only poojas were done by ghee and milk. For low caste community God the poojas were done by toddy and arrack. The low caste peoples are hardworking people, the government and higher caste people restrict their economy by levying majority portion of the income as taxes, fines and in other forms, also some of the taxes levied from people were listed below.

Thali kkaram (tax on weeding chain), Mattu kkaram (tax on cattle rearing), Loom, Chakku (wooden grinder for producing oil), Raw boat, Fishing net, Cart, Sapde, Hammer,

Eannikkaram, Thallakkaram, Menipponnu(to wear gold ornament), Mulai vila, Eazha kkaram (for poor people), Aall kasu (for keeping slaves) etc.

Apart from levying tax for low cast people, the higher caste introduced oozhiyam vela in which, the low caste people should work hard without any wages, Ayya Vaikundar stand against this and make the people to work for wages.

EARLY LIFE

Ayya Vaikundar born in Kanyakumari district, Thamaraiikulam village in the year 1809, his parents were Ponnu nadar and Veiyelal Ammal. His parents called him as Mudi Choodum Perumal means “Lord with Crown”, due to the compulsion of high caste people Mudi Choodum Perumal’s parents were forced to change their child’s name, so they changed as Muthukutty. He growned as bright child and at the age of 22 Muthukutty suffered by diseases, he was treated by local vaidyars, but of no use. For about 2 years Muthukutty suffering from this diseases, his parents and whole families were worried about Muthukutty’s situation. His mother worried a lot and pray for a long time and have slept, the spiritual dream gave a new hope to Muthukutty’s mother Veiyelal, the dream states if they took Muthukutty to Masi festival at Thiruchendur temple his illness will be cured and he will have a divine life. As per Gods words in Veyelal dream, all relatives gathered and took Muthukutty in cloth cradle for attending Masi function.

In those days, for traveling from one place to another there is no vehicle facilities only bullock-cart is there but they can’t afford it and the road networking was also poor, so the only option to reach Thiruchendur was walking through forests, fields. In some places they cross rivers stream, after sometimes they all got tired and to they take rest and had their food at the bank of river Thorravazhi, while they are resting, Muthukutty suddenly wakeup from the cloth cradle and runned towards Thiruchendur and stand in the street the relatives were behind Muthukutty. At last Muthukutty walk towards the sea and he disappeared after some time. Expect Veiyelal all said searching was futile, but Veiyelal had a strong hope that he will return, with that confident, she waited for her son in sea shore for 3 days. According to Veiyelal’s belief Muthukutty arise from the sea on 20th Masi (3 march 1833) Veiyelal filled with happiness and ran to him, by looking her he revealed that he is Sree Vaikundar.

AYYA VAIKUNDAR HOLY JOURNEY

First Ayya Vaikundar starts his journey at Thamaraiikulam, which was his birth place. He visited Udangudi, there some of the peoples greeted him and some hitted him with stone, on the way towards Ayya's journey, he felt thirst so he asked palm tree sap for him and his group the tapper provided the available sap for him and to his group in earthen pot, they had the sap till they get satisfied. A miracle happened there after all drank the sap till there is some more sap present in the pot. Ayya Vaikundar continued his holy journey after blessed him. Again journey continued, after some time he went to pond to wash his leg at that time one man abused Ayya, within a while that man suffered from diarrhoea. That man realized his mistake and apologized to Ayya Vaikundar. Once he realized his mistake he cured from diarrhoea. On his journey people greeted him and welcomed, they provided drinks and eatables to Ayya. He blessed them whole heartedly and reaches Thamaraiikulam.

For holy meditation he select a place in hill station known as Maruthvalmalai. After his meditation he moved to Swamithoppu which was his native place, Sree Vaikundar started to work for people by loving them. The diseased persons were treated by applying sanctified clay and holy water.

HISTORICAL VIEW

Ayya Vaikundar born in Swamithoppu which was known as Poovandanthoppu in olden days. Swamithoppu situated in Thamaraiikulam village, Nanchinaadu, Kanyakumari district, at the age of 24, on 3rd March 1833 he got enlightened and social reformation started. The first pathi was in Swamithoppu there daily Pani Vidai was handled by Ayya Vaikundar's successor, the older male will lead all activities in Swamithoppu.

- **Ayya Vaikundar-family**

The couple Ayya Vaikundar and Thirmal Ammal has two sons, the first son named as Puthukutty, who was wise and noble and got married at seventeen, Puthukutty had 3 sons, the elder son named as Narayana Vadivu, his only son died. The second son of Ayya Vaikundar is Retnavadi. Krishnamani and Bala Krishnan Nadir was the two son of Chella Vadivu. Krishna Mani has one son named as ChellaRaj and Bala Praja Pathi Adikalar is a son of Bala Krishnan Nadir.

- **Ayya cult**

The Ayyacult developed by Chella Vadivu and daily pooja(or) daily Pani Vidai, as well as daily feast was started. Chella Vadivu spread all the principles of Ayya Vaikundar, now the chief administrator of poovandanthoppu (swamithoppu) is Bala Praja Pathi Adikalar.

- **Daily PaniVidai**

Each and every day at morning 3 'o' clock Swamithoppu daily PaniVidai starts ,after they reached the temple they have a holy bath in Mutherai Kinaru and they will repeat the Yuga Padippu which was said by the guru's. Once the Yuga padippu over the bells sound start to rang and produce conch sound, at the middle of this the Sanctum Santhorum door will open. Then finally Vahana Pavani will takes place.

In four car streets around the temple, the VahanaPavani will takes place. NithiyaPal is the offering which is given to Ayya Vaikundar daily without fail. The Chavani Pal, which is prepared by means of rice and green gram is given to the worshippers.

At about 11 'o' clock in afternoon the PaniVidai will start and Uchipadippu is chanted by Gurus and worshippers finally Chavani Pal is distributed. Many number of peoples will join for Uchipadippu at Sunday from long distances.

At 5'o' clock in evening again PaniVidai will start, Yuga Padippu will be chanted by Guru and then it is repeated by worshipper, apart from this anyone can at any time they can have their darshan in temple. Every day there will be three times PaniVidai in Swamithoppu.

- **Car festival**

Once in three year in the month of Vaikasi, Avani and Thai car festivals takes place. In the month of Thai and Avani festival start at first Friday but in the month of Vaikasi the festival starts at second Friday, the festival starts by early morning hoisting saffron colour flag, which is considered as the holy flag. Evening in cradle vahana, Ayya is carried along the four car streets.

- **Procession**

In the month of Masi(19th) many peoples from south Tamilnadu gather together in Thiruchenthur. First they take a holy sea bath on front of Swamithoppu Guru, then the guru apply nammam on worshipper's fore head, then finally at 9'o clock morning procession starts. The movement of procession from one place to another is listed below, Seekachi,

Naninarpathu, Udangudi, Chetirapathu, Theriyoor, Santhayadi, Kottankadu, Muthu krishnapuram, Padukkapatu, Tatarmadam, Tesiyanvilai and thenreaches Ermaikkulam at afternoon then they will have Anna dhanam there.

After Anna dhanam they more from Ermaikkulam to Ayyankulam, then goes through Karaichetty puthur, Koodankulam, Chettikulam, Chalaipudhur, Avaraikulam, Ambalavanapuram, Aralvai mozhi, Thovalai and final destination is Athalavilai.

From Thiruvananthapuram also the procession on starts and they more through Balaramapuram, Parasala, Marthandam, Thackalai and finally to Athalavilai at about 6 in evening.

From all places everyone reaches at Athalavilai, then at Vaikunda malai the Vaikunda jothi is lighted then procession moves to Nagercoil and around it, there with eminent person's conference were conducted and then gathered people stay there at night. Again next day morning the procession started and it is leaded by Swamithoppu Guru, decorated horses, elephants and saffron colour flag will take place in this procession.

Then the procession goes through Edalakudi, Sucheendram, Vazhukkamparai, Ethankadu and north Thamaraiikulam. Finally at 12'o clock reaches Swamithoppu and they have a holy bath in Mutherai kinaru then the worshipper's hand over the holy flag at entrance.

- **Five Pathis**

Ayya Vaikundar created five pathis, the pathis are considered as a holy places for Ayya followers, the five pathis is listed below

1. Swamithoppu
2. Muttapathi
3. Thamaraiikulam Pathi
4. Ambalapathi
5. Poopathi

The head pathi for Ayya cult is Swamithoppu.

POLITICAL VIEWS

The great slogan of Ayya is one caste ,**ONE RELIGION, ONE CLAN, ONE WORLD, ONE GOD**, which states that all are equal in this world, this slogan arose from Ayya due to wide spread of casteism in our land.

- **Muthirai Kinaru**

In those days Brahmins were considered as upper caste people and Nadars were considered as the low caste people. Casteism also plays a role in drawing water from well. Only upper caste people are allowed to collect water from well Ayya stand against for this practices and finally he established new well, where all caste peoples collect water for their purpose this well was blessed by Ayya and name of Muthirai Kinaru.

- **Thottu Namam Podungal(Nammam Charthal)**

Thottu Namam Podungal was the important revolutionary act by Ayya, due to the reason that, in those days only high caste peoples are permitted to temple premises. Lower caste people were strictly prohibited in temple. The poojaris (or) priests makes difference between them and devotees, Ayya stood against this and taught the world that there is no difference between poojaris and devotees, he also insisted that all are created by God. He changed the way of applying sacred ash and sandal paste to worshipper by introducing "Thottu Nammam Podungal act. The priests should put in the sacred ash (or) sandal paste on the worshipper fore head by using their fore finger and first finger. He also made advice to all Gurus to practice this revolutionary act in all Nizhal Thangals.

- **Urupal Kettu**

Lower caste people traditionally celebrate Urupal Kettu function for boy when they attain the age of sixteen, the ceremony was in a grand manner by wearing turban in head, and this practice was not accepted by upper caste people, so they forced them to not conduct Urupal Kettu ritual. The reason behind this was in those days only upper caste people only allowed to wear turban in their head and to wear dresses up to knee, the lower caste were not permitted to wear turban even if they carry loads in their head. Chummad which is made by paddy straws (or) palm leaf (Or) plantain leaf is used to lower caste people instead for turban for carrying loads. In order to bring equality among persecuted peoples, Ayya ordered to people who came to see him should wear turban and dhoti up to toes.

- **PAARI (Avaravar Thedum Muthal Avaravar Vai Than Idungo)**

Paari-tax, which was legally and illegally collected by governing parties and higher caste people, they earn more money by collecting taxes from Nadars and other lower caste peoples. Taxes were received for wearing clothes in upper portion of body, for banyan trees and for palm trees. The earning made by those peoples is spend for taxes more than half, so some of these people run off from their own place. Then their taxes were received from their relatives. Apart from this the lower castes were insisted to pay tax and should work for Hindus without receiving wages, this was stated by them as oozhiyam.

Ayya urged the lower caste peoples to do not give tax, then he said in his own words “**AVVARAVAR THEDUM MUTHAL, AVARAVAR VAI THAN IDUNGO**”. He also advised people to collect their wages for their work, finally all peoples were against paari, and low caste people started savings in the end paari is fully fend offed.

- **Prophecies of Ayya**

Prophecies of Ayya were neatly described in Arul Nool and Akilathirattu. The prophecies were suited for local people in our land and for the whole world, the important prophecies are stated below.

1. Those days our country was ruled by kings, Ayya fore told “ruling were done by peoples” which was happening now-a-days.
2. The power of ruling the state will given to women.
3. Due to the greedy of peoples the forests will be reduced and they will be replaced by constructing buildings.
4. The janma boomi of Rama that mean Ayodhya, which will be destroyed.
5. The transportation will be improved that means roads were constructed, and vehicles were also introduced which reduce the distance.
6. There won't be insufficiency for milk, as well as cows and sheep's will be used as house hold animals.
7. Men and woman get married for their desire towards sex.
8. The ruling of foreigner in India will be ended and all the kingdom will be united and there will be a face of lion in the symbol of India.

SOCIAL REFORMS OF AYYA VAIKUNDAR

- **Sama Panthi Bhaojana**

The Sama Panthi Bhaojana is named as Anna dhanam this was introduced to bring equality among all peoples, in Anna dhanam foods were distributed within hands, no spoons are allowed. Thuvayal Panthy were developed to bring changes in lower caste peoples. During Thuvayal Panthy the people should have vegetarian foods (raw rice and green grams). They should bath in sea water thrice a day and should wash clothes for three times a day. After Thuvayal Panthy, the followers were advised to spread Ayya's cult everywhere.

- **Nizhal Thangals**

Nizhal Thangals are constructed for worshipping for Ayya cult believers, they are constructed in a simple way. The people should be mentally and physically clean. There will be no poojas, gurus, arathy, candle lighting etc. All peoples can pray according to their own wish they need not to give any offering in Nizhal Thangals there is no hundis. Ayya said

“God want love not rituals and anything offered with love is acceptable to God”

Bagavad Gita (9:26)

According to Ayya cult there is no difference between rich and poor, in ayya temple equality was maintaining in Nizhal Thangals. All devotees should wear turban on their head and dhoti upto toes there will be no idol, only saffron cloth, rudraksha and mirror is placed. Daily kutthu vilakku is lighted, they used Tamil language for worshipping. The books written by Ayya was also in Tamil language only.

Sacrificing animals in temple was carried out in those days, this was strictly prohibited in Nizhal Thangals. There was no Bali peetom in Ayyas Nizhal Thangals coconut breaking is also not followed. Nizhal Thangals were constructed in Chetti kudiyruppu, Agastheeswaram, Paloor, Choonda vilai, Kadampankulam and Pampankulam.

EVENTS OF AYYA VAIKUNDAR

- **Samathva Samajam**

Samathva Samajam started in 1836 by ayya to spread the concept of equality among all peoples. By the act of ayya Hindus got afraid and get angry towards ayya. Sucheendram chariot festival is the famous festival for high class people, in that festival ayya and his followers captured the thread of chariot and pulled the chariot with high class people. This makes the high class people to provocative. For this act King Swathi Thirunal arrested Ayya

Vaikundar. Many of his followers gathered and opposed for imprisoning ayya. He was imprisoned by tying him with hemp ropes and kept him at Sucheendrum. When Ayya brought in front of king, he answered philosophically for king's question. Ayya said the universe was created by one God, there is no discrimination between one man and other man.

Ayya jailed at Singarathoppu after 3 ¾ month imprisonment on November 1838. Ayya was poisoned but of no use, poison don't create anyharmness to him, then he was asked to walk along wood in which there is high flame vaikundar walked through the wood, but it doesn't harm him. After two failure attempts to kill ayya, they decided to kill him by placing him in a lime kiln by lightening it, but it was also of no use, they put ayya in a cage where they put hungry tiger, but of no use. Finally king thought to release Ayya by signing agreement the he will only be a leader for his caste people, but Ayya refused it, and said if "I desired means only I will leave the jail otherwise no way". Masi 19th (3rd March 1839) Ayya decided to leave jail and to go back swamithoppu. 20th Masi he reached Swamithoppu, now a days Masi 20th declared as holiday and celebrated as grant function.

CONCLUSION

Ayya Vaikunda swami is a social justice fighter and he is the pioneer for Indian renaissance. He don't have any systematic education, but he learned holy books and novels from villagers. He was imprisoned for advocating the needs for poor people. Samathva Samajam was founded by him and he raised his sound against for animals sacrifice. In order to avoid untouchability, casteism, idol worship, animal sacrifice, taxes etc. Ayya Vaikundar fought vigorously. Vaikunda Swamigal insisted lower class people to have their life without fear and independently, in his mother tongue he raised the slogan

“Jathi Ontai, Matham Ontai, Deivam Ontai, Bhasha Ontai, Lokam Ontai For Men”

The reconstruction work of society without any discrimination was started by Ayya Vaikundar. This work standardized the life of lower caste people. After independence the life of reservation system announced which provide benefits for lower caste people. Ayya works for freedom about eighteen years, he avoided violence, and Vaikundar developed a new religion. He is a spiritual leader, who gave message for whole universe, the British rules were named as Ven Neechan and ruler of Trivancore as “the Neechan of Ananthapuri. There is no

human image of Ayya for proof,so he still is wisdom form. Ayya cult changed the life of low caste people.

REFERENCES

1. Irschick F. Eugene, Politics and Social Conflicts in South India, Bombay, 1969, p.II.
2. T. White House, Lingerings of Light in a Dark Land, London, 1873, p.215.
3. Edgar Thurston, The Castes and Tribes of South India, Vol.IV, Madras, 1909, p. 160.
4. Report of the Travancore District Committee of the LMS, 1864, Santhapuram District, p.4.
5. B. Sobhanan, "Genesis of the Social Emancipation among the Ezhavas", Historia, Vol.11, Madurai, 1984, p.3.
6. Ward and Conner, op. cit., Vol.1, p. 140.
7. K. Rajayyan, "Narayana Guru and Social Reform", Journal of Kerala Studies, Part III and IV, Vol.III, September 1976, Trivandrum, p.433.
8. J.H. Huttan, Caste in India, Bombay, 1963, pp.78-80.
9. T.A.R. for the Year 1865-1866 Quoted by Samuel Mateer, Native Life in Travancore, p.292.
10. P. Sarveswaran, "Sri Vaikunda Swamigal - A Forgotten Social Reformer of Kerala", Journal of Kerala Studies, Trivandrum, 1982, pp. 1 -10.
11. Ahilam, p.189.
12. C. Umaithanu and Kasi Udaiyam, Bahavan Vaikunda Swamigal Varalaru (Tamil), Nagercoil, 1966, pp.41-45.
 - A. John Jacob, The Trivithamcore London Missionary Sanga Sarithiram 1806-1856 (Tamil), Nagercoil, 1956, p.61.
13. Ahilam, p.190.
14. L.M.S. Report for Nagercoil Mission District for the year 1874, p.24.
15. P. Sarveswaran, Vaikunda Swamigal and Social Integration, Proceedings of the Third World Studies, Kanyakumari, 1979, pp.49-56.