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DEVANGA MUTTS IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HEMAKUTA GAYATHRIPEETA-HAMPI KARNATAKA

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Abstract

The caste plays an important role not only in the life of an individual, but its significance in determining his place in the society is inevitable. In the same way, the place occupied by the religion, especially in countries like India is predominant. Like caste domination, religious domination is there in almost every field. Although the system is not acceptable by few or many, it cannot be ignorable. However, it cannot be totally criticized in a country like India, the role and contributions of individuals to the development of their particular castes, indirectly helps the development of the society.

Here, this article imparts to the origin and development of caste Mutt named as Hemakuta Gayathri Peeta at Hampi. This Mutt is exclusive for the weaving caste of Devanga all over India.

Methodology

It is conventional, descriptive and the major sources used are the inscriptions, Government Reports, published works and oral history by personal interviews with the descendants of the family and natives of the region is used.

Keywords

Caste – religion-matha- Hemakuta hill-jagath Guru- Hemakuta Gayathripeeta – Hampi-convention=national Conference.

Introduction

Religion plays an important role and religious organizations had significant place in the development of culture. The religious institution is called as Matha or Mutts in South India has tremendous influence in everyday life in local society. The Matha in India acted as an integrative force. It is the fascinating story of the temple's role as an integrative institution and its contribution to the development of the creative arts such as architecture, sculpture, painting, music, dance, drama and the allied art is remarkable.¹

Matha refers to “Cloister, institute or college, and in some contexts refers to “hut at an ascetic, monk or renunciate or temple for studies².”

The asceticism and monastic practices possibly emerged in India in the early centuries of the 1st Millennium B.C.E. The Earliest Hindu monasteries are indirectly inferred to be from the centuries around the start of the common era, based on the existence of sanyasa Upanishads with strongly Advaita Vedanta content.³ The Matha tradition in Hinduism was likely well established in the second half of the 1st millennium B.C.E. as is evidenced by archeological and epigraphical evidence. Mutts grew overtime with the most famous and still surviving centres of Vedanta studies being those started by Adi Sankara and other major influential Mathas belong to various schools of Hindu philosophy such as those of Vaishnavism and Saivism.⁴ The Mutt host and feed students, Sanyasis, gurus and are led by Acharyas. The Mutts are sometimes attached to Hindu temples and have their codes of conduct, initiation and election ceremonies.⁵ The Mutts in the Hindu tradition have not been limited to religious studies and historical evidence suggests that they were centers for diverse studies such as medieval medicine grammar and music.⁶ The term matha is also used for monastery in Jainism and the earliest monasteries near Jain temples are dated to be from about the 5th Century CE.⁷

Origin of Hampi Hemakuta Hill

Hampi is situated on the banks of the Thungabhadra river in the eastern part of central Karnataka near the state border with Andhra Pradesh. The Hemakuta hill lies in between the Virupaksha temple complex to the north and the Krishna temple to the south. According to local folk lore, there is a mythological reason behind this hill. Lord Siva performed penance on Hemakuta hill before marrying a local girl named Pampa or Parvati. Lord Siva was pleased with the dedication of the girl was consented to marry her. Due to this decision of Lord Siva, it rained gold on the hill. Since gold is known as Hema in Sanskrit, this hill came to be known as Hemakuta.⁸

Historical importance of Hampi Hemakuta hill

It is a collection of modestly sized monuments that are the best-preserved examples of Pre-Vijayanagar and early – Vijayanagar temples. The constructions are easily accessible and provides views of some parts of Hampi and the fertile agricultural valley that separates the sacred Centre from the Urban core with its royal centre⁹. The hill was more than thirty smalls to moderate size temples, together with water cisterns, gateways and secular pavilions.¹⁰ The latest examples are dated to the early 14th century. Some of the structures are differently sized, prototypes of temples or mandapas assembled from blocks

of stones. Others are completed monuments of different designs such as the Phamsana style. Two temple groups in this style look similar each has a triple Vimana consisting of square sanctioning with each set connected to its own shared square Mandapa. The towers on these are in pyramidal granite structures consisting of eleven stacked shrinking in squares and a top is in the form of square Kalasha, which belong to the Deccan style of architecture. Both sets are Shiva temples with triple linga. Early sources misidentified these as Jain Temples because of their simple exterior and interior walls. Two of the temples have inscriptions. The triple Shiva temples on the east has an inscription recording that Virakampila Deva, son of Mummudi Singeya Nayaka, built the Siva temple and installed in it three Lingas. Two inscriptions on the rock near the Prasanna Anjaneya temple dated 1398 A.D. mention that Virupaksha Panditha and his brother constructed a temple of Virupaksha and dug a tank. Another inscription on a rock base records the setting of a lamp pillar in the temple at Jadya Sankaradeva by Bukkava, the queen of Harihara – II in the year 1397 A.D. The architecture of the group of temples on the Hemakuta hill is outstanding. Gayathri Peeta Siva temple structure will always be in stepped pyramid type and the walls are carved with simple design. The pillars of the temple are generally square blocks and multiple individual parts arranged one on the other to form a pillar. They are never carved out of a single stone. There will be round plates in between the square blocks. There will be ideally four pillars before the inner sanctum of a small shrine and the floor enclosing the four pillars will be carved round and square will be carved on the ceiling will exquisitely designs inside it. There will be small elevated platform inside the inner sanctum where the idol of the Siva Linga would be setting.



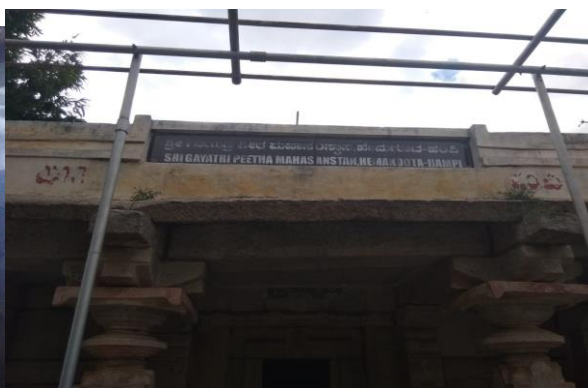
Siva



Sowdeshwari



Inner side Of Gayathri Peeta



Gayathri Peeta

This hill is one among the best place in Hampi to see the sun rise and sun set and is not tedious to reach the top. Among the Hemakuta group of temples, some are in total ruins while some are comparatively in better condition. Some of the temples have partially sunk to the ground. The Archaeological survey of India is undertaking efforts to renovate these temples that had escaped destruction during the Mughal invasions. However, they have suffered damage due to different weather conditions. In India, Devanga Monasteries are five in number, and they are Devanga Jagadh Guru Peeta at Kasi, Srisailam, Hemakuta at Hampi, Sonasala Jagadh Gugu Peetam at Pada Veedu and Sambu Sailam Peetam. People believed that, Kasi monastery was founded by Revanaradhya.¹¹ Srisailam Matha was founded by Marularadhya and Hemakuta Mutt was founded by Ekoramarathya. After the debate between Muthu Sanga Mamuni and Vira Saivas, Muthu Sanga Mainuni got charter from Anegundi ruler Vira Pratabha Rama Raya and since then Hemakuta Gayathri Peeta belongs to Devanga Community.¹² Panditaradhya founded the Sonasala Mutt. Sambu Sailam Mutt was founded by Kahanaradhya. Among these five monasteries, Hampi Hemakuta Mutt is very important.

Jagadhgurus of Hampi Hemakuta Gayathri Peeta



Jagadhgurus of Hampi Hemakuta Gayathri Peeta

According to Devanga Purana, Devala Maharishi could give the cloth to the Gods Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma after destroyed the demons. So, Devala earned the title 'Jagadh Guru' meaning Guru of the world who was the first Jagadh Guru. Evidences proved that during the Vijayanagar empire, Ekoramaradhya, Muthu Sangamamuni, Pani Gowda, Bola Basavappa, Guru Sittappa Digambarappa, Panchi Rasaiah and Sri Kanda Swamigal were also held the positions of Jagadhguru one after another. For a longtime, Sri Gayathri Peeta was without Jagadhgurus and gone through many ups and downs.

At that moment, elders of the community from Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and from various other places of India, felt the need of restoring the glory of the mutt. Due to this reason, Devang Dharmaprachara Sabha was organized at Kathak on 28 December 1904. It had the aim to elect the Jagadh Guru for Devanga Community.¹³ Again this Sabha was convened at Badmi in 1921 with Sankarappa Sakri as its President. It selected Sri Muthusanga Mamuni who refused to obtain Sanyasa. All India Devanga Conference was held at Chennai in 1925. This conference was presided by S.V. Venkatappa Chettiar. Resolutions were passed by the members of the conference. According to the resolution, the Devanga Dharmaprachara Sabha at Kathak had the rights to elect the Jagadhgurus.

All India Devanga conference was held at various places, such as Coimbatore, Chennai and Karnataka in the succeeding years. But, the details of the conference could not be traced. All India Karnataka Devanga Sammelanam convened the conference in 1980. This conference elected 11 members and it was called as 'Sri Gayathri Peeta Devanga Jagadh Guru Pattabhiseka Samiti'. This Samiti collected all the records and properties of Hampi Hemakuta Mutt.

Fourth All India Devanga Conference held at Chennai in 1982. This conference passed resolution regarding the election of Jagadh Guru. Gुरुpeetam was renovated and idols of gods, Ganesh, Nandi and Sowdeshwari were installed at Hemakuta. Pattabhiseka Samiti framed the conditions for the election of Jagadhguru.

They are,

- 1) Jagadhguru must be the age limit of 8 to 16.
- 2) At least for the past three generations Jagadhguru's ancestors must have had disciplined life.
- 3) All the family members should be disciplined.
- 4) Jagadhguru should be well-educated with Foresightedness.
- 5) The parents of the elected Jagadhguru must renounce their rights upon their son.
- 6) Jagadhguru must observe Bramhacharyam.

Above conditions were accepted by the succeeding Jagadhguru, Sir Dayanandapuri Swamiji. His earlier name was Dattatreya who belongs to Nagaabaranadhavaru, one among the 101 subjects of Devanga. He got the training from Kailasa Ashram headed by Trichy Swamiji. After that Dattatreya observe Brahmacharyam. Jagadhguru Pattabishekam was held at Hampi in 30/4/1990.

After the pattabishekam, the Jagadhguru has named as 'Sri Dayanadapuri'. He travelled around India and the world. He reached the hearts and minds of all the people of Devanga Community, and has glown lights of knowledge, prosperity, peace and tranquility, compassion, sympathy and noble thoughts among the people of the community.

Jagadhguru Sri Dayanandapuri Swamiji had plans for overall development of the society and pressurized the politicians to achieve the same. By his efforts, two-day state level convention of the Devanga Nekara Community was held on 28 December 2013 at the Government Junior College in Hasadurga. The objective of the convention was to discuss the problems of the community in detail and put pressure on the State Government to full fill the demands.¹⁴

Jagadhguru Sri Dayanandapuri Swamji

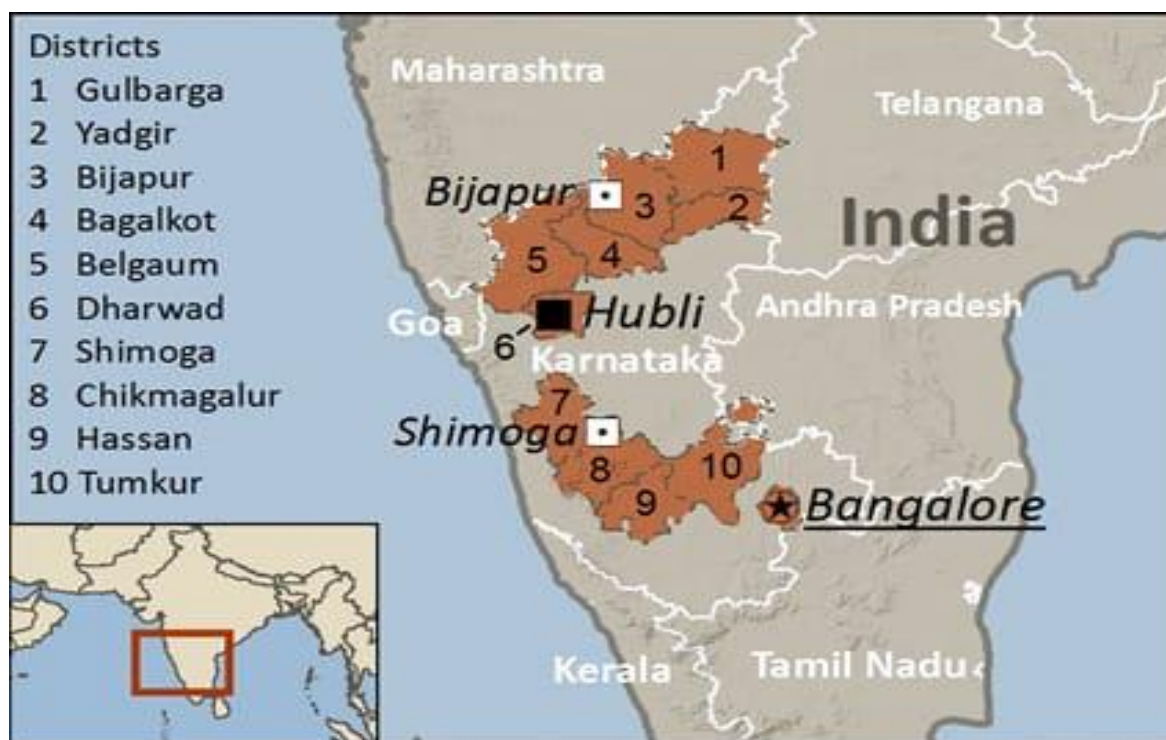


Jagadhguru Sri Dayanandapuri Swamji

All India Devanga Mahasabha was inaugurated by Hampi Hemakuta JagadhGuru Dayanandapuri Swamiji at Arts College. Community representatives from seven states attended the meeting. Swamiji called upon the Community members to be united to achieve their demands. He said the Community was in dire straits because of backwardness and lack of support from the Government.¹⁵

The next day, Telugu Desam Party President N. Chandrababu Naidu demanded the Centre and State Government to extend the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) to weaving Community on par with the agriculture labour as the weavers are getting minimum wages less than agriculture labour. Mr. Chandrababu Naidu made several demands on behalf of weavers including strict implementation of 33% reservation for Backward classes. Sub-plan funds as special component and enhancement of pension amount from 200 to 1000.¹⁶

Former Chief Minister B.S. Yeddyurappa inaugurated Shaka Mutt and Nekara Bruhat Samavesha near Neelamangala in 2010.¹⁷ All over India, at that time, the population of Devangas was 5,63,000.



Sri Gayathri Peeta's branches

Sri Gayathri Peeta is having its branches at Thirumurthi hills near Udumalpet in Tamilandu, Badami, Shivamogga, Bijapur and Neelamangala in Karnataka. Sri Dayanda Puri Swamiji wanted to establish religious and educational centres at various places where the community people are large in number. With the blessings of holiness, Swamiji was performing free mass marriages, Sanskrit teaching camps, upanayanas yoga, Meditation Camps and many other educational, cultural and philanthropic activities for the betterment of the community and the society. He gave primary importance to the construction of the medication centers, Schools, schools for the blind children, old age Homes and Sanskrit schools were also started. Mutt's aim was to start educational institutions for imparting technical and medical education, and colleges to give prime attention to women education all over India. Apart from developing the Educational Institutions, religious and spiritual centres were also developed by the Shaka Mutts.

Now, Sri Swamiji has taken up construction of college building, samudaya Bhavana, Meditation hall and Sri Sowdeshwari Temple at Neelamangala which is very near to Bangalore. The construction works are in progress. The cost of all these projects is estimated at 10 crores of rupees. He is utilizing the money from available sources and assistance from government of Karnataka, as the projects require more than 7 crores for completion. So, Swamiji appeals to the devotees, philanthropists and people of the community to extend their whole hearted support for completion of the work for the welfare of the society.¹⁸

Conclusion

The Mutt was one of the most important institutions of India. A Mutt is a dharmic monastery with a temple. It is a centre of learning. It is a Socio-economic entity. It is also a centre for propagating arts and crafts. It is also a Social Welfare Institution. It is a centre for the preservation of the cultural heritage of the country. It is a centre for charity. It is also functioned as the legal and clinic for the rural population.

Since independence its authority has decreased a little, but it is now here near insignificant. The most beautiful things about a mutt was that despite being a spiritual, religious, cultural, socio-economic, welfare and paralegal institution. Any understanding of Indian society without an understanding of the Hindu matha, will be incomplete. So, for not, many efforts have been done to see the Hindu temple as a living system, as a platform where arts, humanities and sciences came together with people from every walks of life and created an institution unprecedented in human history.

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