



THYCAUD AYYA SWAMIKAL: THE CHAMBION OF EQUALITY IN COLONIAL SOUTH INDIA

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Abstract

Thycaud ayya guru was a towering sublime sage who has imparted spiritual knowledge to a lot of his disciples alike from one flame to another who hailed as from humble huts to lofty regal palaces. He showed the world that there is no need to discard domestic life for spiritual pursuits and a domesticated man can lead a Spiritual life as well. He was the beacon of light that showed the right path to the Renaissance leaders, Sree Narayana Guru, Sree Chattambi Swamigal and others. His incomparable greatness has written history and produced many eminent men who had created history. Thycaud Swamigal was an astute social reformer ever lived in South India. He used to practice what he preached. Because of this, he got disciples from all walks of life, ranging from those lived in mansions to those who lived in huts. He believed in the universal brotherhood and the universality of the religion.

Keywords: - social reformer- Pantibhojanam- Brahmotharakandom -Swati Tirunal- universal brotherhood - universality of the religion

Introduction

Socio- religious reform movements that took place in South India were unique in nature as it included all class, creed, and sections of the society. Such a strong movement emerged in South India because the caste system was rigid, and hence was entrenched in discrimination. The upper castes decided social norms which favored their outlook and the lower castes were forced to atone it accordingly. The caste Hindus enjoyed special rights and privileges; while the marginalized section had hardly any. People who challenged this were seriously punished¹. They manipulated and reinterpreted ancient texts to suit their will. During this time untouchability and unseeability reigned supreme. The lower castes were subdued physiologically, psychologically, culturally and economically. This was the fundamental factor behind Swami Vivekananda's comparison of Kerala to a mental asylum. Discrimination in the name castes was not limited to religions and practices. They were deep rooted in the government sectors such as Education and Health. The rulers of the land were not interested in providing either of this to the lower castes. They knew that giving education to the lower castes will empower them and hence they were kept out of the compound wall of learning. They were also banned from studying². In this context this Research paper highlighted the Social contributions of Thycaud Ayya Swamikal in South India.

Early Life

The original name of Thycaud Ayya was Subbarayan. He was born in 1814 in Nakalapuram. He was the guru of Chattampi Swamikal, Sri Narayana Guru and Ayyankali. He was a Yogi cum Family man¹. Ayya Swamikal started inter-dining (Panthibhojanam) in Kerala during 19th century even before Mahatma Gandhi thought of it. He argued that any Yogi could install idols in temples that inspired Sree Narayana Guru to install idols of Siva². His grandfather Hrishikesan and his father Muthukumaran were great yogis and were migrated to Tamilnadu from Pampunkadu in Malabar during Tipu Sultan's aggression³. Lord Subramanya was their family deity. At the age of 12, Subbarayan received spiritual initiation from two Tamil Saints, Sachidananda Maharaj and Sri Chitti Paradeshi who used to visit Subbarayans family frequently⁴. When he was 16, the Saints took him with them to Africa, Burma, Penang, and Singapore. During this period Subbaraya acquired and practiced yogic techniques of high order. Returning home after 3 years he continued yogic practices, often entering the state of "Nirvikalpa Samadhi". Gradually he acquired the **Ashta sidhies** or divine powers including that of astral travel, but his Gurus strictly warned him not to use them to gain material advantage⁵.

Visit to Kerala

After his return from the spiritual tour, he was instructed by his Gurus to do meditation at the famous Kodungalloor Devi temple in Kerala. After a period of meditation there, Ayya Swamikal decided to tour the princely state of Travancore. While he was staying at an accommodation in Thycaud in Trivandrum district of Kerala, The Mother Goddess appeared in "Poorna Swaroopam" before him in his dreams. As a result of this event, he decided to spend rest of his life in the capital city of Kerala⁶. When he was staying in Trivandrum, Maharajah of Travancore His Highness Swati Tirunal happened to hear about his spiritual prowess and invited him to his palace. After meeting Subharayyan, Maharajah decided to become his disciple⁷. Subharayyan was a great scholar who had proficiency in both Tamil and English languages. He worked in Trivandrum as the Senior Manager of the Thycaud Residency. After a while the Maharajah of Travancore state promoted him to the senior position of Superintendent in Thycaud Residency. At the request of Maharajah, he became the Tamil language Tutor of Mc. Gregor who was initially the Malabar Collector and later the Resident of Travancore⁸.

Ayya Swamikal kept strict discipline in work and was extremely punctual. At his residence he spent most of his time in meditation and in initiating and instructing his disciple's in spiritual practices. Ayya used to deliver lectures on Bhakthi, Yoga and Vedanta in "Saiva Prakasha Sabha" at Pettah, during which leading literary, social and spiritual personalities in and around Trivandrum used to meet Ayya Guru⁹.

Visit to Tamilnad

Swamikal visited Sri Vaikunda Padar of Nagarcoil (Swami thoppu) and visited the famous Maruthwamalai¹⁰. When his father left to Kasi, he had to look after the family. To obey his Guru, Ayya married *Kamalammal* from Kollam and the couple had three sons and two daughters. However Ayya continued his spiritual practices while living the married life. Ayya was a great scholar in Tamil and gained good proficiency in English. He used to deliver spiritual discourses at the "Ashtapathana Sabha" in Chennai¹¹.

Style of Working

Ayya Swamikal was very punctual and disciplined in his work. At his residence, he spent most of his time in meditation and guiding his disciples through various stages of meditation. Ayya used to deliver lectures on Bhakthi, Yoga and Vedantha at Jnanaprakasha Sabha at Pettah. During this discourse, he used to meet famous cultural personalities of the state. These personalities used to regularly visit this venue to hear and see Ayya Swamikal¹². After hearing his religious discourse, many of these personalities decided to

become his disciples. Following his footsteps, many of his disciples have attained the highest stage of Samadhi during their meditation practicing sessions.

Philosophy

Ayyavu Swamikal was an adept of 'Siva Raja Yoga', an ancient technique practiced by Tamil Saiva Yogis like Agasthyar, Bhogar and their line. He was one of the great teachers of Sivaraja Yoga in modern times. He belonged to the line of Tamil Siddhas consisting of Agasthyar, Bogar, Manikka vachakar, Tirumular, Tirujnana Sambhandhar, etc. His disciples Chattampi Swami, Narayana Guru, Swayam Prakasini Amma, and others continued that line¹³.

Ayyavu Swamikal taught his disciples the principles of Advaita¹⁴, and the practice of one God, one religion and one caste. He proclaimed that 'Intha Ulakathile Ore Oru Matham, Ore Oru Jathy, Ore Oru Kadavul Than'. (One caste, one religion and one god in this world). This teaching influenced Chattampi Swami and Narayana Guru. Guru translated this doctrine into Malayalam- 'Oru jathy, oru matham, oru daivam manushyanu' which got a magical charm and helped to remove caste difference from the mind of the people of Kerala¹⁵. The movements initiated by Ayyavu Swami and his disciples are more based on Humanism, Rationalism and Democracy based on universal love rather than the European model of Renaissance or Reformation.

Disciples

Ayyavu Swamikal was instrumental in shaping the personalities of many spiritual, cultural and social leaders of erstwhile Travancore in late 19th and early 20th centuries. Ayyavu demonstrated by his own life how realization of the Supreme Self is possible even for ordinary people through practicing Siva Raja Yoga. The greatness of what he taught is that realization is possible even while leading family life and carrying out one's worldly duties. Chattampi Swami, Narayana Guru who contributed much for the modernization of Kerala was his disciples. Ayyavu Swami had about fifty disciples consisting of people from diverse fields and castes extending from palace to huts, Nambuthiries, Nairs, Ezhavas, Nadars, Princesses, administrators, doctors, engineers, Muslims, Christians, Hindus and the like¹⁶.

Predictions

Ayyaguru Swamikal was a good astrologer and had also the siddhi to predict future events. His predictions that the younger Maharani's son will become the last Maharaja, that North India will get separated, Ayyankali will be nominated to a participative administrative body to help the downtrodden, the day of his Samadhi etc. became true. Ayyankali was nominated to Sri Moolam Assembly and was honoured by the Rulers and later his statue was unveiled by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Maharaja Chithira Tirunal was also the last King of Travancore as he predicted. Swami also attained Samadhi on the date, he predicted. India got separated into India and Pakistan about fifty years after his prediction¹⁷.

Works

Ayyavu wrote several books on Bhakthi, Jnana and Yoga in Sanskrit, Tamil and Malayalam. A few were later published by his disciples. The main works that could be identified as his are: *Brahmotharakandom*, *Pazhanidaivam*, *Ulloor Amarntha Guhan*, *Ramayanam Sundarkandom*, *Hanuman Paamalai*, *Ente Kasiyathra*¹⁸

Conclusion

Ayya Swamikal attained Samadhi on 20 July 1909. He was one of the reputed society reformer ever lived in the state of Kerala. He has a huge following of disciples. Many of his disciples were impressed by his knowledgeable mind and spiritual practices. Some of the illustrious disciples were Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Chattampi Swamikal, etc¹⁹. He used to be disciplined and punctual in his work. He never

compromised on principles for which he stood vehemently in his life. At home, he spent his time doing meditation and teaching his disciples various techniques of meditation. According to one school of thought, he had mastered the Tantric principles of both Buddhist and Hindu yogasanas. These yogic techniques were taught to him by Shaiva Saints from Tamil Nadu. His famous words of wisdom stating the universal appeal of man, religion and God were taken for good by his illustrious disciple Sree Narayana Guru.

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