



HISTORY OF SRI SADGURU DAMMURU VENKAVADHUTHA

SOMASHEKHAR

Somashekhar

Research Scholar

Department of Studies in History
and Archeology, Tumakuru
University, Tumakuru.

INTRODUCTION

Ballari is a district centre in the border of Karnataka state. It is a region with black soil with eight taluk centre. It can be noticed that this place has become famous as the 'Land of Mines', though agriculture is the main occupation here, as there are many industries being established as a result of the abundant availability of mines. Tungabhadra Dam is one of the main attractions here and is the main water source for drinking and irrigation purposes in these areas. There are Hagari and Chikka Hagari sub rivers here.

There are references of this place in the historical epic Ramayana. Mourya, Satavahana, Kadamba, Badami Chalukya, Rashtrakuta, Nolamba and Ganga dynasties have ruled here. We can notice the past grandeur of Vijayanaga empire, which has created its own everlasting popularity in the world history, here. There are, still, the monuments and forts of Uchchangidurga, Jarimale, Gudekote and Sanduru dynasties which came to prominence after Vijayanagara dynasty. This place which has historical and cultural significance is also the land where a number of Sharanas, Saints, Sufis and Avadhuthas took birth in 18th and 19th centuries.

Many factors related to support the fact that the impact of 12th Vachana movement helped the growth of spiritual heritage in this place. Avadhuthas are prominent in the spiritual heritage of Ballari; among them Sri Sadguru Dammuru Venkavadhutharu has contributed, as can be noticed in the regional history, in form of values.

BACKGROUND AND MEANING OF AVADHUTHAS

Avadhutha tradition, though it has the history of thousand years, became more popular in 17th century through literature. Avadhuthas made the spiritual heritage more active by creating awareness in people against the conversion policy of the British and inequality in

Indian society in 17th and 18th centuries. Many avadhuthas emerged in 18th and 19th centuries all over the region and continued the Avadhutha marg.

‘*Avadhutha*’ is a Sanskrit word which is the combination of two units ‘Ava’ and ‘Dhutha’. ‘Ava’ means ‘protection’. ‘Dhutha’ means ‘to abandon’. There are different meanings to the word ‘*Avadhutha*’ viz.,

1. Monk, hermit, a yogi who has abandoned the relationship with the world, has given up Varnashrama Dharmas and is interested in meditation.
2. A special kind in resignedness; one who rejects the love and affection of the people towards him.
3. An anchorite who was once being disrespected and shaken.
4. A hermit who has separated himself from all worldly feelings and obligations.
5. Who has renounced everything.
6. The monks who have no rules. (These people accept food from everyone except those who have committed ethical sins. They always practice spirituality. They eat food lying on floor.)
7. An Athivarnashrami hermit who has abandoned all bondages.
8. An Avadhutha who has violated everything with the thoughtful knowledge of the soul has the features of Yati, Sanyasi, Yogi, Parivyajak, Paramahans, Thuryatheetha, etc.

These people who stay away from the struggle of life, they achieve their spiritual power through practice. They abandon position, arrogance, wealth, grandeur, family, attraction and are free. Being alone and roaming from one village to another is their unique feature. They will have achieved secret power practicing yoga in the hillocks. They search for a guru to attain salvation in future. After they find a guru, they seek his preaching. Eventually they gain ultimate knowledge become a guru, great monk and perform astonishing and unimaginable miracles naturally. Such people are called ‘*Jeevanmuktha*’, ‘*Parabrahma*’, ‘*Paramahansa*’, ‘*Paramarooda*’ and ‘*Avadhutha*’. *Sri Sadguru Venkavadhutha* is a significant one among such.

SRI SADGURU DAMMURU VENKAVADHUTHARU

Venkavadhutha was born in Devalapura of Ballari district. His father’s name was Narasimhappa and mother’s name was Mangamma. He belonged to Yadava caste. Venkappa was the childhood name of Venkavadhutha. Their family was poverty stricken. His parents joined him to a school with the desire provide him proper formal education despite of their poverty. But Venkappa was not interested in studies and would like to be in seclusion away from his classmates. He was not listening to anyone and was behaving the way he liked. Working in the fields was Venkappa’s favourite pass time. He would feel sorry for the hungry and poor. He would support them as much as he could.

MARITAL RELATIONSHIP OF VENKAVADHUTHA

Venkappa was not interested in Marriage. He finally consented to marry obeying his parents’ force. He married Hanumanthamma, the daughter of Thodalappa from Koluru of Ballari district. The couple had 6 children. It becomes difficult to maintain the household. So, he went to in-laws with his family and stayed on there. Besides poverty, helplessness, mental disturbance and perturbation, he had to face the harsh words of his relatives. It resulted in mental stress which developed a feeling of renunciation about life and made him interested in asceticism. He decides to get rid of the worldly bondages and find the real happiness of life. He realizes that he needed a guru for this. He searches for his guru.

SEARCH FOR THE GURU

The prominent Dasa Purandaradasa says, “*Guruvina gulaamanaguva thanaka doreaydanna mukuthi*” (You cannot find salvation until you surrender yourself to the guru). Venkappa realized that we are blindfolded by the worldly pleasures and we need the guidance of a guru to come out of the darkness of this binding. Hence he started his search for a guru and found Mahaguru Annaji (Gowdaru) Avadhutharu.

MIRACLES OF VENKAVADHUTHARU

Venakavadhutha became popular in the surroundings day by day. He performed many miracles and made the people astonished. The folk developed a feeling of devotion on him. Some of his miracles are mentioned below.

- The Avadhutha gave a lemon to a devotee who approached him and who had no children. Within a year had elapsed, that devotee was blessed with a baby boy.
- Bhandralu and the surrounding villages were drought hit and the people approached and begged Venkavadhutha for rainfall. He asked the people to tie a horse and said “Let this horse die if it won’t rain”. It rained heavily as if Varuna, the lord of rain, was obedient to the words of Vankavadhutha.
- The lemons which Venkavadhutha dropped into the fireplace didn’t get burnt in fire, rather they were lump.
- Venkavadhutha would travel from Bhandrala to Kadooru and Hampe and return in a night. He could walk the distance of 50-60 miles in a night.
- He was tending to wild animals in Joga village like his pets. It is his miracle that he resolved the drought of Joga village.
- A boy from Gududooru had fallen down in the crowd and broken his hand during a saphaha (a celebration that lasts for a week). When it came to the knowledge of Venkavadhutha, he went there and touched the boy. There was no pain to the boy again.
- The guards at the entrance stopped Venkavadhutha when he wanted to have darshan (vision) of Lord Kumaraswamy. But miraculously, he was inside the temple.
- Cholera had spread in Dammuru and the neighborhood villages. Venkavadhutha travelled around mounted on horseback and threw some chanted lemons. This stopped deaths and sufferings in Dammuru. Thus, Venkavadhutha is remembered by the people even today for his miracles.

SOME SUPPLEMENTARY SOURCES TO PROVE THE HISTORY OF VENKAVADHUTHARU:

1. Sri Venkavadhutha’s tomb.
2. Sri Venkavadhutha’s Idol.
3. The articles Sri Venkavadhutha had used.
4. Sri Venkavadhutha’s Math.
5. Complete chariot utsav.
6. Devakkemma’s pavillion.
7. Chadmi Eramma’s Pavillion.

8. Devakkemma's tomb.
9. Devotional songs on Venkavadhutha.

These are the evidences to the life and miracles of venkavadhutha.

LIFE VALUES OF VENKAVADHUTHA

1. To be free from familial bindings.
2. He preached that devotion, knowledge, quietism and yoga are the basements to salvation.
3. Equality, coexistence, secularism and love for religions were his values.
4. He was a humanitarian who wished only good to all living beings.
5. He had believed that the guru was the ultimate god.
6. He preached that self-satisfaction and achievement were impossible without the blessings and guidance of the guru.
7. He gave importance to the purification of inner self but not to the outer appearance.
8. He rejected the practice of idol worship and proclaimed that the god is shapeless.
9. He preached to respect women and to provide equality to men and women. He suggested the pupils to stay away from bad and immoral activities.
10. He emphasized on helping the helpless, disabled and diseased.

Venkavadhutha, who had cultivated unique personality and values decided to abandon his body and declared the same to his disciples. He drank a brimmed full of water and abandoned his body in a yogic way without any pain, suffering and diseases. He passed away on Sri Shalivahana Shaka 1183, Srinanda Nama Samvathsara, Magha Sudh Chathurdashi. On the same day of pournima, his devotees descended his body into the cave of the pandal which he himself had built.

Venkavadhutha has created his own significance in the history of Ballari region. Though he is not physically present with the people, he has been a spiritual power to them. It is a sincere responsibility to throw light on the spiritual factors, miracles and values of Venkavadutha.

REFERENCES

- Badigera V.S (2002). Ballari Jilleya Samskruthika Ithihasa, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Karnataka University, Dharwad.
- Basavaraja Sabarada. (1995). Gulabarga Jilleya Anubhaavada Kavigalu, Kannada University, Hampi.
- Kariyappa Maligi (2008). Ballari Jilleya Avadhutharu. Samshodhana Malike, Kannada Sahithya Parishad, Bengaluru.
- Nagaiah J.M .(2005). Ballari Jilleya Samskruthika Ithihasa, Lohiya Publications, Ballari, 2005.
- Thippeswamy D.S. (2006). Ballari Jilleya Janapada Geethasampradayagalu. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Karnataka University, Dharwad.
- Vemal Gatteppa Shreshti. Dammuru Sri Sadguru Venkavadhuthara Charithre, Vimala Traders, Hosapet.