



Vedhaboomiyiloode : Legacy Of Panjal

MS. SHEREENA P A

GUEST LECTURER, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, SNGS COLLEGE PATTAMBI

Abstract

Here I discussed about the history of the small village Panjal in the district of Thrissur Kerala .Main focusing of the study is the vedic legacy of the plae .There is the venue of the old vedic sacrifice ,Athirathram.Through the study I researched the vedic heritage of the place,significance and the relevance of vedic rituals,and criticisms against the sacrifices.I collected primary and secondary datas .

Index terms

Panjal,vedic rituals,athirathram,legacy,samavedees,animal sacrifice

Introduction

The Namboothiri Gramams of Kerala hold a Vital place in the historical & cultural narrative of the region. They were considered as the custodians of the vedic tradition. The Sapta gramams all considered the oldest & most sacred namboothiri villages in Kerala; These include; Panniyur, Sukapuram, Thrissur, Peruvanam, Irinjalakuda, Thirunavaya, Kodungallur.

The gramams were centres of srauta rituals (Srauta rituals are a type of vedic fire sacrifice ritual rituals performed to expected something in return) Namboothiri gramams were closely tied to temple administration. Temples like Vadakkumnathan, Sukapuram, Dakshinamurthy & Thirunavaya, Navamukunda became focal points of spiritual & cultural rights.

Panjal a small village in Thrissur district as a namboothiri gramam. Through this study I focused to the local history of Panjal a small. I specially stressed its Vedic tradition in Panjal, Vedicrituals preserved here ie, athirathram,Samaveda Brahmin families, vedic temple Lakshmi Narayana Etc. I tried to answered the questions like the of Vedic legacy of Panjal & the significance of Vedic rituals like Athirathram

My research paper mainly aimed to the local people of the village and history seekers. They should know about the deeproute level knowledge of the place. I used primary and secondary sources to study. Visited and interviewed the vedic families of panjal.

Panjal:The land of Samavedees

There are a lot of myths behind the history of the place name . The ancient temple in Panjal , Sree Lakshmi Narayana Kshethram, was founded by the Panchala king Drupadhan. Then the place known as Panjal.The Parvallipoomala that is used by pandavar is still used here for worship. Another story is that the zamorine attacked Peruvanam gramam in the 16th to 18th century so they migrated here and known as "panjuvannavar." then the place became known as Pnjal.Panjal is included in the 32 Namboothiri Brahmin settlements in Kerala.Among this Shukapuram,Peruvanam,Irinjalakkuda were the strong vedic centres.

Panjali namboothiris followed the Samaveda hereditary. Nellikattil mamannu, Muttathukattil mamannu, Thottam, Perumangal, and Korattikkara were the famous Samaveda Namboothiri families in Panjal.

Panjali included in the Perattu vedhi nadu Thottassery Thalassennor were the rulers of the area. It gained prominence as a major centre of performing Athirathram, an ancient vedic ritual dedicated to Agni. In 1975 and 2011, Athirathram conducted here. 1975 Athirathram held under the leadership of the famous indologist Frits Staal, Professor of South East Asian studies at the University of California who filmed the entire ritual and later wrote the monumental work 'Agni'.

Athirathram: Athirathram is derived from the Sanskrit words athi (excess) and rathram (a span of time), a yantra performed with ultimate dedication and effort over several days. The purpose of Athirathram for the well being of mankind and culture. The person who controls and guide the yagam is called yajamanan his wife also the part of the ritual called yajamana pathni. After the completion of the ritual he is bestowed with the title 'akkithirippad'. There are 17 individuals called Rithwiks to assist the yajamanan. Main rithwiks are called Adharyu, Hothan, Udghathan and Brahman; they are specialized in the four vedas yajur, sama, rig, samam. Chithi is the main fire place which is shaped like an eagle called Garuda chithi. The offering to the fire is somarasam, the juice from somalatha available in western ghats. The right to supply this plant is vested on the Raja of Kollamkode in Palakkad. 17 priests are required to performing Agni. First day begins with the yajamana and his priests entering the ritual enclosure carrying three sacred fire.

Asymbolic animal sacrifice would be performed for Vayu. On the fourth day the Indra god is invited to attend the ritual. On the tenth day some priests with yajamanacrawl in snake like procession on to the altar. On the 12th day yajamana and his wife take avabratha bath followed by a sacrifice of goat. After the ritual yajamana installs three fire in his home and perform morning and evening Agnihotra for the rest of his life. The last Athirathram in Panjal performed in 2011 April 4 to 15. The yajamana of 2011 Athirathram was the Puthillath Rmanujan Somayaji.

Significance and criticisms of vedic rituals:

Vedic rituals hold cultural and spiritual significances in Kerala. Vedic rituals like Athirathram, considered most ancient religious practice in the world. These rituals ensure the continuity of vedic knowledge. The fire altar believed to be the medium to connect humans and divine. It involves the participation of different class and community. Vedic rituals in Kerala attracts scholars, tourists and offerings insight into the India's spiritual heritage. It also faced some crucial criticisms like; cost of the ritual, caste based and gender based inequality, only Namboothiris can perform the ritual, other communities and women are excluding from the sacrifice, rational questioning about the outcome of the practice, animal sacrifice is the most critical thing among this.

Ekadasam pasu – on the 10th day of the Athirathram ten male and one female lamb sacrificed to different 11 gods. Another ritual Agnihomeeyam pasu, Maithravarneeyampasu for each one lamb sacrificed. Before the sacrifice yajamanan's wife cleans the lamb the servants kills the lamb by suffocation and stretching the lamb's tongue outside. They collect the vasa on a stick of Kumizhu tree. It covered with darba grass and fired in the altar. This followed the extraction and boiling of 11 other organs of the lamb. The animal sacrifice of Athirathram strongly criticized by so many scholars. One of notable among them is the famous, V T Battathirippad article 'Panjal Paadathe kashappushala'.

There are so many controversies behind the ritual like this but they can't answer properly to the questions. But they stressed the significance of the vedic rituals. They tried to find a spiritual value of this ritual apart from the material or scientific validity.

Lakshminarayana vedic temple

It was a Samaveda padshala there is no festivals. Trisandha was held here – Trisandha is a unique ritual, the deity worshiped with vedas – 'vedam kond upasikkuka' Rigveda thisandha held here in 1908. It takes nearly 7 months. Samaveda thisandha held here in 1085 and 1098. The main murti worshipped in the temple is Lakshminarayana. The vigraha is in 5 feet. Palpayasam without sweet is the prasadam offered in the temple. The shrine is the most important Samavedi centre. The west side of the temple became the field of Athirathram ritual. The temple belongs to 7 madoms; Mathur, Vaikakkara, Pathirappalli, Muttathod, Nellikodu, Korattikara and Kaipanchery. The temple stood as a main centre of vedic rituals and learning.

The local history of Panjal purely blended with the legacy of vedic rituals and practices .It is the main centre of samaveda Brahmin settlements in kerala .There are 10 samaveda manas existed .It is an agricultural land with plenty of paddy field on the banks of Bharathapuzha in Thrissur district It is the home of vedic ritual athirathram ,worship for the prosperity of mankind .The significance and the existence of the vedic rituals is a debatable topic .The rigid and complex nature of the sacrifices and the barbaric activities like the animal sacrifice make it questionable .

References

1. Fawcett,F.,2001.Namboothiris:Notes on some of the people of Malabar,Asian Educational Services.
2. Nambuthiri Website Trust,1999.Calicut
3. Sreedharamenon,A.,2008.Cultural Heritage of Krala,DC Books.
4. Gramacharithram,Kerala sahithya accadeny,Thrissur.
5. Staal,Frits.,2010.Agni:The vedic ritual of the fire altar,Motilal Banarasidas Publishers.
6. Bhattathirippad,vt.,2019.voi.8,VT yude samporna krithikal(panjal padathe kashappushala),DC Books.
7. Chungath,Rajan.,2012.Athirathram,Green books.
8. Interview with Krishnan Namboothiri,Thottathil mana, Panjal.
9. INTACH Intangible Cultural Heritage.

