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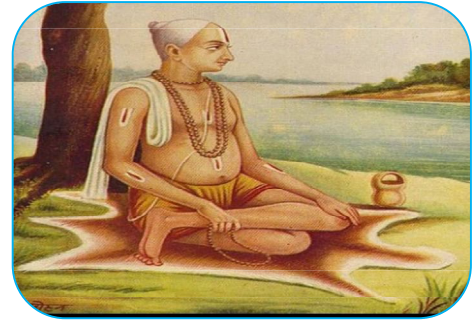


A CULTURAL HISTORY OF GOSWAMI (GIRI) FAMILIES OF BASAVAKALYAN

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ABSTRACT :

Adi Shankara, himself considered to have established the Dashanami tradition organizing a section of the Ekadandi monastics under ten names. He organized these ten sects under the four Mathas or monasteries with headquarters at Dwaraka in the West, Jagannath Puri the East, Shringeri in the South, and Badrikashrma in the North. Each of these four monasteries was headed by one of his four main disciples who each continue the Vedanta sampradaya.



KEYWORDS : *Ekadandi monastics, Dashanami tradition organizing, Vedanta sampradaya.*

INTRODUCTION :

Monastics considered to be restricted to specific changes made by Adi Shankara While the Dashanamis associated with the Shankara Mths follow the procedures laid down by Adi Shankara, Some of these ordwes have remained partly or fully independent in their beliefs and practices. They are also outside the control of the Shankar Maths.

The followers of these Dashaname Sampradaya are spread all over India and even abroad. The states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh Assam and Bengal have the greatest concentration of the Dashanamis. In several places of Karanataka also these Dashanamis are found. The most prominent among them who have preserved the tradition, Cultural heritage, Customs and Spiritual tenets are the Giri Families who established an entire colony consisting of neatly fiftyfive families in Gosai Galli situated on the west outskirts of Basavakalayan town in Bidar districts.

BASAVAKALYAN IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:-

Basavakalayan, the largest town in Bidar district, was the capital of two dynasties namely the Chalukyas and the Kalachuris of Kalyana. This town witnessed a great social reform accompanied by famous revolution known in the history as Kalyana Kranti. During the reign of king Bijjala, Basaveshwara was his prime minster who advocated the same principle of equality and fought against different kinds of social injustice. This town is also known as the “**Vatican city of Veerasaivism or Lingayat Dharma**” a religion established by Basaveshwara and his companions. After fall of Kalachuri dynasty, Basavakalayan came under Muslim rule for a long period.

THE GOSWAMIS (GIRIS) OF BASAVA KALYANA :-

Though the members of Giri family are among the ancient inhabitants of Basavakalyan very little has ever been known about them. It was Dr. R.M.Shadaksharayya who for the first time made an attempt to lift the veil of obscurity from this ancient family. In his book entitled "**Basavkalyana :Kale Mattu Sanskriti**", he has thrown light upon various aspects connected with this family. Taking the pioneering work of Dr. R.M. Shadaksharayya a step further, I paid several visits to Goswami Galli in Basavakalyan along with my companions, and met several prominent people of Giri sampradaya notably its chief pontific head Dr. Jagdish Giri who belongs to eleventh Generation a detailed discussion with him about the origin, succession and Several aspects related to Mahanta Math, the chief among all the Gosai Mathas of Basavakalyan, has provided us the following information about it.

According to Dr. Jagdish Giri, the ancestors of Giri family came to Basavakalyan from Rajasthan in the 12th Century mainly with the purpose of doing business. They traded in Pearls, Jewelry and other items. They used Horses and Camels for the transportation of their merchandise.

The ancestor of first generation of Mahant Matha was Mahanta Pratap Giri can be regarded as the founder of this family at Basavakalyan. The second Mahanta in this family was Mahanta Bhagwan Giri. Mahanta Bhagawan Giri adopted two successors. One was Jogender Giri and the other Nirbhaya Giri. Nirbhaya Giri went to Hyderabad where he constructed Eight to Ten Mathas. Asafzahi Govt. granted him 3000 Acres land in deferent places which are now in 3 states of Andhra, Karnataka and Maharashtra. While Jogender Giri stayed at Basavakalyan and continued his religions activities. The fourth Mahanta in this line was Mahanta Deepa Giri and Mahanta Hari Giri, Mahanta Raghunath Giri, Mahanta Baliram Giri and Mahanta Bhola Giri were fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth Mahants respectively. Up to this point all the Mahants were Sanyasins who choose their successors from any caste or religion. This tradition can be viewed as actual implementation of lord Basaveshwara's teaching where he strongly advocated the abolition of caste system. The ninth Mahant in this lineage was Mahant Keshavgi who was not a sanyasin but a grahasthashrami. The name of his wife was Smt. Subhadra Bai who had only one daughter. And the daughter of this daughter was married to Mahanta Ram Giri who was the father of Dr. Jagdish Giri and the Tenth Mahant of this lineage the name of his wife was Smt. Anusuyabai, Dr. Jagdish Giri, present Mahant of Mahanta Matha who has completed MBBS Degree, leads a simple but pious life and is looked up to by all the members of Giri families. He has two sons name Amaya Giri and Koustubh Giri.

RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL CUSTOMS :-

The members of Goswami community belong to both Shaiva and Vaishanava tradition. But all the members of Goswami community living in Basavakalyan belong only to Shaiva traditions. They worship lord Shiva, bear Rudrakshas on their person and apply Vibhuti sacred ash to their forehead and other parts. But unlike the people of Veerasaiva community they do not bear Istalinga on their person. **Shiva Mahima Stotra** is their main scripture whole of which Dr. Jagdish Giri has by heart. Abhisheka to Shiva is their chief religious ritual which is performed quite meticulously and religiously by all the members of Goswami community.

During dasara festival they celebrate Navaratri. During this Saptashiti Parayana is regularly performed. On the last day of Navaratri Saptashiti homa is arranged. Largely the religious practices are similar to those of the Vaidik Brahmins like naming ceremony, marriage etc. Formerly the marriages use to be arranged in their own lands but now a day function halls are being preferred. Dasara, Deepawali, Sankranti, Shivaratri, Ugadi and Ganesh festivals are the main festivals which the Goswamis celebrates. During Ganesh festival they perform Ananta pooja and tie the sacred thread around their arms.

Every Giri family has its own graveyard adjacent to their math where the dead are buried and tombs are constructed on that place in black stone. Lotus figure and the figures of multy hooded serpent, Peacock, Parrot, Goat and Sun God are engraved on these tombs. Deepa graveyards beside other buildings which might have been used for penning their animals such as Horses, Cows and Camels. The first two Mahantas of Mahanta Matha namely Mahanta Pratap Giri & Mahanta Bhagwan Giri

took live Samadhi , where as the other were buried after their death. The death anniversary of these Mahantas is observed with great solemnity.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE MATHAS: -

The architecture of Gosai Mathas conforms to that of most of the buildings founding cities like Jodhpur and Udaypur in Rajasthan. The architecture of Mahanta Matha and some other mathas in basavakalyan is as follows:

The first entrances is a large door of heavy timber followed by two roofed square varandas on each side again by roofed varandas supported by black stone walls on outer side and massive pillars of timber on inner side. Near the roof the space between these pillars is shaped as undulating arches that is arches with wave-like pattern. At the extreme end of the first inner courtyard which is open to the sky there is the second door equally massive but smaller in size. After the second open to stay inner courtyard which again like the first courtyard is flanked on each side by similar varandas. The first floor of this matha is the extension of ground floor structure except for the varandas. At the end of the second inner courtyard there is one more specious varanda in the centre of which there is an altar with the idol of Dattatraya. This varanda at its end leads to two specious rooms. There are some thirty massive teak pillars on each floor. The roof of these varandas is formed by massive teak rafters which are supported on the pillars. These rafters are interlinked with small pillars. These rafters are inter linked with small rafters the space between which closed with heavy teak planks. Upper portion of the roof is covered by a special masonry a mixer of sand, lime and other ingredients. The roof formed in this way is a good insulator of heat which remains cool in summer and warm in winter. Adjacent to the main building of the math there is another building built in black stone and equally massive with an attic over the entrance. This building was used mainly to accommodate the women folk as the sanyasin Mahants stayed away from them. Above the main entrance of each math a black stone tablet engraved with Lotus figure is fixed. At the outside of the entrance on the upper most floor there is a balcony known as Nagarkhana from where three times in a day the music of Noubat was sounded.

The entire Mahanta math complex is spread over an area of five acres. There are ten main Goswami mathas which are as follows:

1. Mahanta Math: The Chief and Highest among all Mathas
2. Santosh Anadji Giri Matha
3. Kripa Giri Matha
4. Bhagwant Giri Matha
5. Shamsher Giri Matha
6. Beni Giri Matha
7. Maharaj Giri Matha
8. Tapi Giri Matha
9. Sada Giri Matha
10. Kishan Giri Matha

VOCATION AND PROFESSION:-

The agriculture is the main vocation of the Goswami community of Basavakalyan. Each family has their lands at the outskirts of the town. Most of them have their own source of water which is in the form of large well. These wells are constructed in solid black stone and have the shape of Linga. Even here we can find a stone tablet with lotus figure. The largest among these wells spreads over an area of 2 acres. Apart from the wells there are shrines of different deities such as Ganesh, Bhavani and Mahadeva in their fields. One such shrine dedicated to lord Ganesha is known as doom Ganesha. A sufficiently large black stone idol of Ganesha situated in this shrine was (chipped) broken at different parts by some miscreants. This shrine has no roof over it. Most of the families have large buildings on their agricultural land which were meant for penning their milch and draught animals, and for storing

the agricultural produce. Some families have large buildings meant for accommodating the pilgrims and providing food and shelter to them.

The people of Goswami community are rich and are working in the fields of religion, Social Service, Politics and Business etc. Some of them are Doctors, Engineers, Teachers and Government Servants.

NIRBHAYA GIRI, who was one of the two successors adopted by Mahant Bhagwan Giri was sent to Hyderabad where he established Eight to Ten Goswami (Giri) mathas. This was the richest branch of Goswami community which owned substantial part of the property of Hyderabad before Independence.

DHANARAJ GIRI, another branch of Goswami community has cloth mills in Sholapur and a large building called Dhanraj Mahal near hotel Tajmahal in Mumbai. He had Jewellery business and owned Eight hundred acres of land in Begum Bazar. In several parts of Maharashtra, the Marathas treat these Goswamis as their guru.

CONCLUSION

Such was the glorious past of Goswami community at Basavakalyan. Unfortunately nothing of it as entered into the historical records of this region. At this account merits its own due place in history. It is with the intension of bringing to light this neglected and forgotten page of history that I have ventured upon a survey of this community at Basavakalyan so that people may have some knowledge of it.