THE ROLE OF GARODIS IN THE SOCIO-CULTURAL HISTORY OF TULUNADU

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Introduction: To a superficial observer it may appear as though India is a land mass occupied by diverse social, religious and linguistic groups putting on a mantle of political unity. But a careful study of its present day institutions reveals that they are built on the solid foundation of a rich and ancient culture evolved over a period of at least five thousand year. Different shades of Indian culture represented by different linguistic groups, big or small are often mistaken for heterogeneous cultures.

The Culture of a people is essentially religious and metaphysics. A proper understanding of this is possible only through a keen insight into the religious and spiritual concepts, forms of worship, both domestic and public celebrations of rites and rituals, characteristic features of the religious institutions, principles involved in sacred edifices, their physical forms, sculptures and the sanctity ingrained in them. With each one of these has its own significance in culture growth; it is this synthetic and cumulative effect of all of these factors on community life that produces culture and its development and evolution.

In a multifaceted culture of India, historical reconstruction may depend on the traditional historical sources; with changing approach oral history has been treated and accepted as an integral approach in historical writing. In the absence of written records and documents on the life and culture of Tulunadu, our knowledge is based on verbal transmission carried on convincingly over the centuries, got classified with the advent of Christian missionary into coastal Karnataka, who undertook the work of recording the rich oral narratives in the literary form, with great conviction.

In this paper I would like to analyze the socio-cultural and socio-religious attributes with regard to the Garodis of Tulunadu (South Kanara) with specific references to the evolution of the Garodi, Epic Twin heroes, hero worship practices, the art and architecture of the Garodi, Garodis and the socio-cultural harmony, the folk cultural values, the Billava (Toddy Tappers) community associated with the folk religious practices of Tulunadu, along the line analyze the British colonial experience with the Tuluva socio-religious practices and their influence on the historiography of Tulunadu, would also be taken for interpretation.

In the Socio-Cultural and religious aspects of Tulunadu, the GARODI stands as testimony of Tuluva cultural history which has been deeply embedded in the society from time in memorial. This unique religious practice has eventually succeeded to withstand the superimposition of the Brahmanical traditions on one hand and westernized modernity on the other hand.

I would like to touch upon one of the aspects of the Tuluva Culture. The GARODIS of Tulunadu. Among the religious centres of Tulunadu the religious...
practices exhibit its uniqueness. One such religious centre which draws attention and stands out as an epitome of the cultural facets of Tulunadu is the ‘GARODI’, a shrine exhibiting outstanding place of worship in the tuluva culture. It is interesting to note that apart from unique practices of the Garodi, it has attained a unique place in the regional domains of Tulunadu. Garodis are identified as Gymnasiums practicing and imparting the ancient war skills. The folk work Vadakann Pattu refers to the unique form Adavu (Pattu) [War skills practiced in gymnasiums] war skills taught by the Garodi Acharyas (teachers), which is learnt and practiced by war trainees coming from Kerala.

While examining the religious practices of the Tuluva one has to make a basic distinction between the folk cult and Hinduism. The ancient religious beliefs, thoughts and practices which are believed to be the worship of super natural elements, possessing extraordinary and tremendous powers. Establishing a new order based on truth, justice sacrifice and moral values were elevated to the position of Heroes or protector/savior of the people. They are worshipped in shrines called Garodis, they are Billava Heroes who were also called Baiderlu. The twin Heroes worshipped by all Shudras (Non-Brahmanas - lower caste of the Hindu Society).

The twin Billava Heroes, name Koti Baidya and Chennaya Baidya or Baiderlu are the departed spirits. The temple set apart for the Baiderlu to reside in is called garodi, Koti and Chennaya showed exemplary bravery and war skills in the battle fought between the two local feudal land lords and the battle ended with the tragic death of the brothers. The Baiderulu or twin heroes of Tulunadu who sacrificed their life to uphold justice, truth and righteousness. have become symbols of social justice, truth and human values. Thus envisaging a socio-cultural transformation of the tuluva society. Throughout the length and breadth of Tulunadu shrines called Garodis sprang up for the worship and reverence of the twin heroes of Tulunadu.