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CO-RELATION BETWEEN ECONOMY & RELIGION-THE CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS BEHIND TEMPLE BUILDING IN MEDIEVAL TIMES -WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HOYSALA PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

Co- relative religious thinking and subsequent economic activity have been closely linked throughout the history of medieval south India. This study scrutinizes the case of South India which portrays a strong inter-relationship accessible between religious thought and economic structure. Thus, religion in the Indian tradition has not detached itself from the secular affairs of society such as economic and political activity. There was a strong harmonizing affiliation between religious contemplation and economic arrangement which was mirrored through all-pervading classification of the caste system.The practice of granting land in lieu of cash salaries and in lieu of their state service intensified this process. The temple was the nerve-center of spiritual activity. It was an influential, powerful, social and economic institution. The inscriptions speak of various gifts and endowments.

The donors took care to ensure the smooth and continuous services in the temples, stipulating the amount of gifts and grants to be used for scrupulous services. In course of time, the temple became a big land owner. It served as an educational institution, it served as a treasury, it acted as a Court house and it was a center of annual and seasonal fairs and exhibitions. embassy , a scholastic center etc . It combined several proportional diversifications in delivering societal issues. It played a strategic part in providing community needs.

This paper probes in detail about the corporate activities performed by the temples in medieval society and brings to light various issues connected with temple building and religious donations.

INTRODUCTION-

Co- relative religious thinking and subsequent economic activity have been closely linked throughout the history of medieval south India. This study scrutinizes the case of South India which portrays a strong inter-relationship accessible between religious thought and economic structure.South Indian system of pouring of religious thought and economic activity requires deep research. Philosophically, the Hindu tradition recognizes that ultimate reality is not only transcendent and impersonal, but also, immanent and personal. The aim of life for a Hindu is not just accomplishment of spiritual freedom , but equally material satisfaction. Thus, religion in the Indian tradition has not detached itself from the secular affairs of society such as economic and political activity. With this perspective, that religious thought embraces both social and political, as well as strictly religious matters, this paper tries to look into correlative aspects of economy & religion.Medieval South India was characterized by very different religious and economic modes.The lofty Vedantic monotheism and the atheistic Buddhism were replaced by a form of theistic Hindu and Buddhist thought. This was the heyday of the bhakti movement of South India with philosophers like Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhwa and singer

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saints like Shaiva & Vaishanava alwars advocated the joy of complete devotional surrender to God.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Historians have noted the role played by Muslim invasions during this period. Bhakti was an answer to the communal apprehension prevailing at that time. Devotional movement was moderately a response to the spiritual and social discrimination that was unleashed on the Hindus by the Muslim invaders. Devotional theism implied dualism between man and God, and was distinctly dissimilar from the monistic Upanishad thought where man and God were universally inseparable. This distinct form of religious thought in medieval India was coordinated by a monetary configuration that was equally different from that of socio religious influences in ancient India.

SIGNIFICANC E OF THE STUDY

The practice of granting land in lieu of cash salaries and in lieu of their state service intensified this process. There was a strong harmonizing affiliation between religious contemplation and economic arrangement which was mirrored through all-pervading classification of the caste system. One aspect of the evolution of bhakti was the renaissance of unyielding ritualistic practices, and as part of this ritualistic rigidity, the caste system took on a new form. Though an ancient doctrine, throughout much of India's history, the caste system was flexible and liberal in that it allowed for mobility between castes and did not discriminate on the basis of caste with respect to economic opportunity and education.The temples were built by individuals, Kings, high officials and also by the collective efforts of the people .The temple was the nerve-center of spiritual activity. It was an influential, powerful, social and economic institution. The inscriptions speak of various gifts and endowments. The donors took care to ensure the smooth and continuous services in the temples, stipulating the amount of gifts and grants to be used for scrupulous services. In course of time, the temple became a big land owner. It served as an educational institution, it served as a treasury, it acted as a Court house and it was a center of annual and seasonal fairs and exhibitions.This sincere study reflects many contrasting and complementary configurations of several sectarian overtures. The impact of social sectionalisation through the columns of society on the sacramental and secular activities such as setting up of seats of learning called as Agraharas, building of public utility services such as Anicuts, water houses resting places community halls ,construction of temples and mutts etc, providing support for installation of images, providing scholarships to meritorious students endowing to temple building activities, consecration of images etc.Besides these social interpolations the political scenario was witnessing harsh treatment at the hands of Islamic invaders which was growing alarmingly dangerous to otherwise conservative South Indian Society. The enforced penetration of Muslim power to South Indian geographical jurisdiction lead to the rise of many warrior classes within Hindu society. This was primarily due to the threat of forced conversion. The society had to bear the discrepancy in everyday life through the application of the policy of mass conversion and universal abandonment of age old sacraments which consequated in unforeseen societal breakups and lead to creation of furor among masses. The cumbersome and deliberate Islamic intrusions had allied impact on society as the political fortune of Southern kingdoms came to be decided by the strength of sword. This conferred many people from lower social ranks to place themselves in higher status by joining the band wagon of a warrior class. This they achieved higher social power which laid claims to their superiority and respect. This frequency of mobility of warrior class with in Hindu society suggested that during the period of Hoysalas the socio religious and ethnic mobility was on the rising.

THE FINDINGS

TEMPLE AS A CORPORATION

Temple was a corporation founded by the local public, enjoying a large and devoted patronage form the King and his subordinates. It was a symbol of healthy co-operation between the king and his people. The Kings and feudatories gave villages or lands for its benefit or made over taxes are remitted taxes on its lands.

TEMPLE AS AN EMPLOYER

It played the role of the big land owner and employer. Its services, upkeep and maintenance

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provided employment to a large number of people, such as officers, decorators, attendants, cooks, water carriers, drummers, bodyguards, garland maker, sweeper, Manger , treasurer, inspector, caretaker of lands and granary, oil monger, potter, washer man, reader of Puranas, Astrologer, Dancing master, Singer of hymans ,Stage Manager, Accountant, dancing girls, white washer and others. The offices were generally hereditary and the servants mainly depended on the temples for their livelihood.

TEMPLE AS A FEEDER

Most of the temples had Chattra or feeding houses attached to them , where food for ascetics, the poor and the beggars was freely distributed, Inscriptions mention numerous instances of deposits made by individuals, who desired to fulfill certain vows or acquire some merit.

TEMPLE AS BANKER-The temple served as a local bank. It lent money to the members of the locality and thus gave Philip to cultivation, conversion of dry lands into wetlands and gardens and to handicrafts. Inscriptions furnish instances of people receiving loans for the these purposes.

TEMPLE AS A ENDOWER

The temple received a variety of gifts and endowment in the form of lands, flower gardens, oil mills, the five musical instruments, ornaments, cows, betel leaves, areca nut, oil, images, golden fruits and other fruits, carts, troughs, golden armors and thrones. Thus, the temples served as abridge of Dharma between the people of different classes and the ruler.

TEMPLE AS A PRIVILEGE HOLDER

It enjoyed many privileges such as free grazing of temple-cows in any land of the village, receiving the property of those who died without successors, and immunity from tolls and other taxes. It was a magnetic & captivating nerve-centre of all societal activities, social, culture and economic. By being a land owner, it automatically maintained an economic relation and contact between villages. The rise of Bhakti cult and its impact on the existing social order forms an interesting topic for study. The advent of Sri Ramanujacharya, the saint philosopher and his propagation of Vishistadwaitha philosophy and revolutionary Basavanna and his propagation of Veerashaiva philosophy had a great causative impact on the existing social order. The common man so far neglected by the Brahman community started reckoning their power in society. With the rise of new feudal monarchy in the South Indian horizon at the end of 8th century the Bhakti movement also gathered momentum. The following can be derived as consequences of Bhakti movement.Those kings who gave royal patronage to Jainism and such other sects formerly now turned to extend their patronage to renewed Hinduism which was gaining popularity. This explains the reason behind extensive royal patronage to Vaishnava cult by Hoysala kings which was intensified and accelerated through the tempo of Bhakti as a new socio religious movement.The escalation of temple building activity explains voluminous impact of the royal patronage towards this new reformed Hinduism.The kings and chieftains who supported Brahman elite groups became more powerful than those who opposed Brahman for their selfishness.

Brahmanism with its institutional base in the temple centers with agrarian settlements in the surrounding had emerged as the most dynamic progressive force. This was evident form a vast number of epigraphs which clearly declare the grant of land, money and other related investments to donate lands for expansion of habitations and residential areas.A communication system linking Royal courts palaces and marts of South India with other parts of India and abroad came into being.Brahman leaders had succeeded in organizing the local people as tenants to work on the lands given in endowment by kings, elite and army chieftains and to serve as temple servants providing various services to the temple and the surrounding. The castes which immediately settled themselves in these temple settlements over grew in power and authority over those who were slow to accommodate themselves in the new environment.This lead to grading and compartmentalization of castes and sub castes with infinite variations of economic and ritual status. Gradually with the increase in the population quotient they were in a position to mobilize the man power of the vast tenant class for royal military service. This gave rise to a warrior class of people who were driven to assisting the royal warfare needs.The kings and the Brahmans patronized each other because they felt that both were frail without the other. They were accompaniment to each other in the power politics.

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TEMPLE AS A SCHOLASTIC INSTITUTION

temples also served as educational institutions imparting various kinds of sciences. There were a number of religious centers which were emotionally involved to teaching as well.

These centers were ArsikerSravanabelagola,Belur,Hariharapura,Hampapura,HosaHolalu, Koravangala,HosaAgrahara,AkkiHebbalu,Malali,Sravanabelagola,Balligave,Sarvagnapura,Kondajji, ArsikereDwarasamudra,Kikkeri,Velapuri,Sasalu,Melukote,Tonnuru,Somanthapura,Nuggehalli,Basad ihalli , Govindapura, Virupakshapura etc. They were geographically strategic & scholastically significant centers of instruction during this period. All the learning institutions which were established were keenly watched maintained and provided with all sorts of aids as and when required. The elite class took interest in maintaining these for posterity. The learning centers could accommodate several students in several study subjects continuously and were able to provide it with all sorts of benefits. The masters who excelled in their respective subjects had to prove their brilliance and proficiency. Only later they were chosen to work in these Agraharas and settle there permanently. Great care was taken in the selection of this town.It scenic beauty quietness tranquility and large space was primarily taken into account. Several lands were earmarked for building temples in the nearby vicinity. It could afford accommodation for any number of students. It could hold privileges such as land and serving people. It was large enough to hold temples of magnificent nature. Moreover it was bordering a big tank and River Hemavathy -a big tributary of River Cauvery, flowed in the bordering villages closely. The elevated hills in the west ward direction enhanced the scenic beauty of this place. The land was fertile Paddy and Ragi were grown along with cotton and silk. The place had contacts with markets of Srirangapattana, Mysore and Pandavapura. The land routes connected the markets of Melukote and Todanuru on the northern borders Chananrayaapttana and Hassan on the southern borders. Akkihebbalu and Holenarasipura on the eastern borders and Santhe bachenahally and Sasalu on the western borders and hence it was suitably located to be an a focal learning point. The type of education imparted here was different from that of other mutts and temples. They were concerned with secular education along with religious and traditional education. Because this center catered to all types of learned masters and pupils from different localities. Traditional learning included the Four Vedas and their countless Commentaries while secular learning included Mathematics, Logic, Metallurgy, Botany Agriculture, Astrology philosophy, Astronomy etc.

Summarizing-

Thus a temple played a vital role in medieval society. It was an employer , a corporate office, a cultural embassy , a scholastic center etc . It combined several proportional diversifications in delivering societal issues. It played a strategic part in providing community needs. The Hoysalas built an empire which was strong in strength, long lasting in relationship and commanding in administration. Here an implicative study of their architectural study is introduced with ample cognizance of research documents. The temple also generated steady income by financing commercial enterprises and acted as bankers and moneylenders. Phenomenal growth in the functions of the temple demanded its physical growth. This necessitated the growth of habitations around the temple. However having tightly enclosed their temple precincts with in a forbidden wall the only way to acquire more land for the temple complex was to throw another concentric ring of even larger battlements ,punctuated by equally huge gopurams. The seeds of the growth of a temple was thus firmly sown. This later lead to the growth of temple cities. To highlight the distinctiveness of their temples the Hoysala architects with the help of royal patronage set about evolving entirely new patterns for their places of worship.

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