Chapter XXIV

Sectarian Harmony

"Hinduism is essentially tolerant", says A.L. Basham, "and would rather assimilate than rigidly exclude". Right from the Vedic times the history of Indian is characterised by adjustment and conciliation in racial and religious aspects. In the same way, the two major religious sects among the Hindus, Saivism and Vaishnavism have rubbed along happily together, developing in the people the conviction that both are equally right. Such a spirit of compromise was made necessary by the force of circumstances in which Saivism and Vaishnavism developed. It may be recalled that during the early days of their history, Saivism and Vaishnavism had to contend with the heretical faiths, Jainism and Buddhism. To combat these religions, Hinduism had to accommodate all forms of theistic beliefs within the fold of orthodoxy. The syncretism resulted in the concept of Trimurti --- the three-fold manifestation of the same god---Brahma, the creator, Visnu, the preserver and Siva, the destroyer. Gradually, Brahma went into the background and Hara and Hara became more predominant. But for a short sectarian rivalry, Saivism and Vaishnavism reconciled and as Basham remarks, each sect is monotheistic in the sense that it regards its own deity as the supreme god - Mahadeva. At the same time it does not deny the existence of the other gods. Such a catholicity has been fostered even by the Bhagavadgita which declares that

1. The Wonder That was India, p. 309.
2. Ibid.
the Lord would strengthen the devotion whichever god the devotee worships with sincerity.

In Andhra, from early historical times, both Siva and Visnu were worshipped. It may be recalled that the early Satavahana rulers, Satakarni I and his queen Nagamika showed equal reverence to them. The Banaghat Inscription of Nagamika omits Siva in the list of gods she invoked. But the royal couple named one of their children as Saktisri, which is essentially a Saivite name. Gau-tami Balasri compared her illustrious son, Satakarni not only with Rama and Kecava but also with Mount Kailas the abode of Siva. In his Saptaratri, Hala included Sattas with themes Vaisnavite as well as Saivite. We have seen how Sripuravata, which was originally a Buddhist centre could finally accommodate both Saivite and Vaisnavite deities. Among the Salarayana and Vaisukundin kings, we find both Paramasahaswaras and Paramabhagavatas. It was during this period that syncretism between different cults made remarkable progress. The Salarayanas successfully effected a reconciliation between Surya and Visnu on the one side and Siva and Surya on the other. The sculptures of the Vaisukundin period reflect the rapprochement between the different cults. In the sculptures of caves of Undavalli and Kogalrajapuram, the Saivite and Vaisnavite themes were freely mixed. The famous Lekshmi cave at Kogalrajapuram has a beautiful facade. The entrance of the cave is adorned by three parasikas or gables, containing Brahma.

1. Infra, Pl. VII, Fig. 2.
Siva and Visnu and the latter two with their consorts. Inside the cave there are sculptures of Siva, Gajendramoksha and Pataan smoking Krada. In the Durga cave are to be seen the sculptures of Siva, Ganapati, Brahma and Visnu. The main cave at Mundavali is Vaisnavito. The second storey which contains the huge Ananta-sayana image, as on the two walls of its Mantapa, the ingodbhava episode. The second cave which is to west of the main cave contains in its cornice three gables with the images of Brahma, Siva, Parvati and Visnu-Lakshmi as the Mogalrajapuram cave noted above.

The syncretism of different cults is best revealed by the sculpture recovered from Podamudiy in the Cuddapah district and assigned to the Vaisnavudina period on stylistic grounds. In this, there are in the following order from right to left the representations of Ganesa, Prahma, Narasimha, Sivalinga, Visnu, Devi, Umasahasvara with Mandi, Laksmi as privaten symbol and Vishnuvardana. K.A.K. Sastr makes that the images "show clearly the almost completed development of orthodox puranic Hinduism with its multiplicity of gods and its colourful mythology. In the century or two that followed this development was continued further and the Pakkan which enjoyed the beneficial effects of political unification under the Calukyas of Badami served as a bridge between the North and the South of India and promoted the free exchange of influences, religious, artistic and literary, to their mutual advantage and the cultural unification of India as a whole."

1. Ibid.
2. K. Rama Rao, Vaisnavudina Coins, Pr. 18-32.
3. Ibid.
4. Vide Supra, p. 373.
5. C. Sivaramamurti, D.D.C., pl. 1, fig. 4.
6. Ibid. P. 12.
Sastry asserts that the sculptures furnish a "notable instance of an early rapprochement among the different cults within the fold of Hinduism."

The process gained momentum under the Early Calukyas. An inscription of the Calukyan king Vijayaditya mentions that the images of Brahma, Visnu and Mahesvara were installed in Vatapi-pura in the third year of the reign, i.e. A.D. 699. Or the ceilings of the oldest temples at Aihole are found the above three gods, though the central position, as on the caves of Undavalli and Mogalrajapuram, is occupied by Siva. In the Papanattra and Tribhuvanesvara temples of Pattadakal and in the Durga temple at Aihole we find an impartial admixture of Siva and Visnu images. Especially in the Tribhuvanesvara temple, scenes from the life of Krishna are beautifully depicted.

The temples of the Eastern Calukyas also show the same type of catholicy. The Saivite temples at Bichavol contain in the niches of its walls images of Visnu, Brahma and Surya. From the Siva temple of Calukya Bhimarabha comes an image of Yoga Narasimha. The Bhimesvaratemple at Daksarana yielded the sculptures of Visnu, Brahma, Rama and Narasimha. The Bhairavakonda cave temples of Siva contain the images of Brahma and Visnu.

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1. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 38. See Pl. IX, Fig. 1.
7. Ibid., PP. 21-27. See Pl. VIII, Fig. 4.
The songs of the early Alvars who flourished during this period are also characterised by similar chanting. One of the Alvars sang the glory of the Lord on Tirupati in the following way: "His name is Aran (Hari) and Naranan (Narayana); His vehicle, the bull and the bird; His word the Book; the house of residence the hill and the waters; His function, destruction and protection; the weapon in hand the trident spear and the disc; His form though one is fire and dark cloud."

**Panchayatana Worship:**

From sculptures and inscriptions, we thus learn that by about the 7th century A.D., in Andhra desa five deities emerged as the most important. They were: Siva, Visnu, Sakti, Ganapati and Surya, and they became centres of different cults. But at the same time, it can be inferred that attempts were afoot to bring the deities into harmony. Kumarilabhatta who organised the Smarts is credited with the introduction of the Panchayatana worship, which included the deities mentioned above. He was followed by Sankara who too insisted that the Smarts should treat all the deities with almost equal reverence. Sankara, in the course of his campaigns, visited the temples of all deities without any discrimination. Since his time probably, the worship of Panchayatana became an integral part of the Smarta system.

In the Panchayatana, five deities find place and the order of the deities depends upon one's own preference. Each deity is

1. See above, Section on Kumarilabhatta.
represented not by his or her image, but only by a small piece of stone such as the Bana linga and Salagrama. The Salagrama is a small bell-like black stone picked up from the bed of the Cauvery. There are different Pancayatanas such as Sivapancayatana, Visnupancayatana, and Devipancayatana. The Pancayatana gets its name from the deity that occupies the central position. Even in building temples, in Andhra, the Pancayatana system was adopted. The temples of Kalahasti and Jogi mallavaram belong to this type. In the niches of the outer walls of the Garbhakaya of those temples were inserted the deities of different cults.

Sectarian Conflict

It is strange that sectarian jealousy and rivalry became more pronounced after Kumarila and Sankara who strove for harmony and syncretism. The Vaisnava Acaryas and the Saiva Pandits attacked in their own way the Mimamsaka and Vedanta Schools of Kumarila and Sankara respectively. At the same time each -- the Saiva and Vaisnava -- began to attack the other and claimed the monopoly of Truth. The Saiva and Vaisnava literatures of the period reflect the conflict between the two sects. Absence of a common rival in Buddhism or Jainism might have contributed to the sectarianism.

Scholars are of opinion that the Vaisnavas developed into a rigid sect, intolerant of other faiths, under Ramanuja. It was his sectarianism which was responsible for his persecution at the

2. I thank Dr. R. Ramasubba for this information. His book on these temples entitled "Select Andhra Temples" is in print.
hands of the Cola emperors. According to the Sthalasmatrayam, entitled, Venkatanastra Itihasamala, there was a dispute between the Saivites and Vaisnavites regarding the possession of Tirupati and Ramanujacarya managed to prove that the image inside the temple was Vaisnavite and not Saivite. We have already noticed that the Viravaisnava policies of Brahmanayudu led to the terrible battle of Palnad.

More aggressive appears to be the attitude of the Virasaivas towards the Vaisnavites. Sripati Pandita and Sivalanka Vencena are said to have vanquished Vaisnavites in debate. As already noted, Palkuriki Som Natha took a pledge not to speak to, not to see and touch a Vaisnavite. He would not touch grain produced by Vaisnavites.

1. At Mahablipur, in some caves old sculptures are erased and on them the Vaisnava symbols were superimposed. Such acts of vandalism should have provoked the Cola rulers to persecute the Vaisnavas and Ramanuja is said to have fled away from Srirangam and take refuge in Mysore.

2. According to the Venkatanastra Itihasamala, some time before Ramanuja Tirupati was occupied by the Saivites, who claimed the image inside as Saivite. In the court of the local ruler, Ramanujacarya suggested a method of proving the real nature of the image. He asked the king to place inside the temple the symbols of both Siva and Visnu, i.e., Trisula and Damaru and Sankha and Cakra. According to the symbols found on the body of the image next morning, the true nature of the image should be decided. That night, Ramanuja, as he was the incarnation of Sesa, took the form of a serpent, entered the sanctum and placed the Sankha and Cakra in the hands of the image. Next morning, it was decided by the king that the image was Vaisnavite. Divested of its mythological element, it may be stated that Ramanuja somehow managed to establish the Vaisnavite character of the image.

The Conflict between the Saivites and Vaisnavites continued for the possession of Tirupati. It came to a head again in the time of Devaraya II of Vijayanagara and then too it was decided in favour of the Vaisnavites.

But such instances of conflict and cases of bigotry were very small in number. The Smarta syncretism started by Uma-rila and Sankara could steer clear through the stormy waters of sectarian rivalry. The rise of the Kakatiyas to absolute power in Andhra helped the growth of the Smarta system. It is already noted that the battle of Palnai not only weakened the feudatory families and thus paved the way for the establishment of the Kakatiya empire under Kakati Rudra I, but also damaged the fortunes of Vaishnavism, clearing the way for the increased popularity of the syncretic Smarta system.

The Kakatiyas were no doubt Saivites and Kakati Rudra took the title paramanabeswara. He built a temple and installed in it Siva in his own name as Rudreswara. But in the same temple, he installed the images of Vasudeva and Suryadeva and gifted a land named Maddiceruvu for conducting the worship of the three Gods. One of his officers, Gangadharamantri built numerous temples at different places both for Siva and Visnu and at places like Gangaciya, he made arrangements for the performance of Sandiyavandana by Brahmins. Most of the inscriptions of the time of the Kakatiyas contain invocations to both Siva and Visnu.

Another landmark in the growth of Smarta syncretism is the reign of Ganapati. Indeed Ganapati took Gividiksa from Visveswara

1. Vide Supra, pp. 262-364.
2. Anasanakonda Inscription, Tel. Ins., I, PP. 5-12; Infra, Pl.XII, Fig. 2.
4. Karimnagar Ins., Ibid. PP. 12-17.
siva, the head of the Golaki matha. But he honoured the famous Telugu poet Tikkana. The part played by Tikkana in the religious life in Andhra is partly mentioned above. He strove to establish the essential unity of godhead and as a means to it he popularised the concept of Harihara. It seems that the concept of Harihara had entered Andhra from Karnataka, where the image of Harihara is found on the walls of the Papanatha temple at Pattadakal, which is assigned to the 7th century A.D. According to Comaraswamy this concept travelled to the Islands in the far east as early as the 7th century A.D. In Andhra also the Harihara concept seems to have gained some currency and in the Somanasvar temple at Mukhalingam there is an image of Hariharamurti. Tikkana dedicated his Mahabharata to Hariharamatha.

From the Telugu work Siddhasvara Caritram, we learn that Ganapatī honoured Tikkana at his court and showed great regard for his teachings. It is mentioned above that Palkuriki Somanatha, the Virasaiva preacher and poet found Brahmanism very strong at

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1. Malkapuram Inscription, op. cit.
2. Vide Supra, PF. 326-327.
6. He invoked Harihara in the following sloka:

Kimastimalam kimu kaustubhamva
Pariskryayam bahmanayasetvam
Kim kalakutah kimvatsasatah
Tavasvadu vada prabho me.

Andhra Mahabharata, Viratanayam, Avatarika.

7. Siddhasvara Caritram, PF. 114-126.
8. Vide Supra, P. 257, No. 5.
Further, Visveswara, the pontiff of the Golake Matsu and the Dihsaguru of Ganapati was pro-Brahmanical. The Malayarum inscription tells us that he invited Brahmins of Samavada from Bengal and of different gotras from the South and made arrangements in his Matha for instruction in the Vedas and Agamas. Under his influence, Ganapatideva is said to have appointed Brahmins in the temples of his empire. It seems reasonable to assume that the emperor and his preceptor, having realised the threatening danger of Turkish onslaught from the North, tried to bring about religious unity among the people of the Sakatiya Empire and thus prepare them to meet the threat and to preserve their freedom and culture.

CONCLUSION

Andhradesa has thus experienced the impact of many religious developments during the Ancient and Early Medieval periods. The keynote of her religious history has always been grafting the new to the old and attempting at a synthesis of the two. As a result many of the old beliefs and practices persisted throughout, though in modified and rationalised forms.

The process started in Andhradesa with Apastamba about the 5th century B.C. In his Dharma Sutras the mingling of the Aryan and non-Aryan systems is clearly visible. Apastamba gave official recognition to many of the practices found among the Sutras and women folk. The primitive ancestor-worship was developed by him

1. V. Prabhashakasatry, Preface to Basavanumana.
into the elaborate Sradha ritual. Jainism and Buddhism also progressed effecting conciliation with the old local practices. The primitive dolmen or the megalithic tomb gave place to the Buddhist Cāitya, which in its turn led to the practice among the Śāivites of installing Siva Lingas in temples in honour of their dead relations. Vaisnavism and Śāivism contain many primitive rituals. Gradually the Mother Goddess developed into Śakti and the Village Goddess.

The process started by Apastamba was accelerated by the Satavahanas, who in the words of K.N. Panikkar "can claim to have fulfilled the historical mission of establishing cultural unity of India". It was under them that Brahmanism and Bhagavatism were reconciled and the way was cleared for a rapproachment between Buddhism and Hinduism. The basic theistic outlook of the people led to the deification of the Buddha, whose system was slowly corrupted by its admixture with the native religious rites, into Mahayana and Vajrayana schools.

The emergence of Vīśnu, Siva, Buddha and Jina as supreme gods produced sectarian rivalry which occasionally broke into violent conflicts. But curiously, the rivalry was limited to the prophet and the priest whereas the inspiration for adjustment and synthesis came from the common people. For the common man, fear of retribution and hope of reward are the sources of devotion and love, and therefore he only tries to please every god and displease none.

1. A Survey of Indian History, P. 78.
Devotional theism gradually reconciled with Brahmanical social system. The Bhagavadgita declared the caste as an integral part of the divine order. Subcastes began to appear as early as the age of the Satavahanas. This led to the division of society into castes and subcastes, which led only to communal rivalry, undermining social solidarity. In the literature of the Kakatiya period we come across eighteen castes (astadasa varna). The most prominent of the Suvarna sub-castes, Valamas and Reddis became almost the ruling castes. The fierce rivalry between these two communities was first manifest in the famous war of Pandal. It continued in the time of the Kakatiyas, weakening the resistance to the Muslim invaders and ultimately leading to the fall of the Kakatiya Empire.

1. The local Records inform us that the pro-Valama policy of the Kakatiyas estranged the Reddi community, who frequently revolted against their over-lords and tried to assert independence. Finally, when Pratapa Rudra II was in the grip of the deadly fight with prince Juna in A.D. 1323-24, the Reddi section of his army under the leadership of Bobbaraddi deserted him, thus leading to the downfall of the Kakatiya Empire.

Kakatiya Sancita, pp. 77-78.
But the fervid love of one's own god and methods of worship, instilled by devotional theism, especially Vis-va-
sivism, stood the Andhra in good stead in that hour of peril. It inspired them to rise against the iconoclastic
aggressor, regain political freedom and preserve their religion
and culture in a short time after the Muslim conquest.

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