

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

A systematic qualitative research is historical research, which involves examining past events to draw conclusions and make predictions about the future. According to the said scenario, the historians did the method of research to the tuning of computer. In the past scholars applied macro level of research in history. They approached history of a nation as a whole highlighting the glories of major dynasties and ignoring the contributions of minor dynasties to history. Hence now a day's scholars have begun to apply micro level study in history and topics are selected at even village level or at taluk level to highlight the contribution of that area to history. By applying this concept, historians are making in-depth study, on historical research and bringing out monumental works.

To propagate this trend, the present study "History of Agasteeswaram Taluk as gleaned from Inscriptions" has been selected for research. Agasteeswaram is a very ancient place, which contributed much to Indian history and heritage. It is one of the four taluks of Kanniyakumari district in Tamil Nadu. The sangam literature

refers this region as Nanjilnadu, ‘a land of splendor and prosperity’; hence it witnesses vast agricultural lands, dense forests with herbals plants and many temples. The inscriptions which are engraved on the temples brought more importance to the temples as well as the life of ancient kings. To know the objective history of the region, the inscriptions must be taped. Hence the present research analyses the inscriptions of ancient temples in Agasteeswaram Taluk to bring out the history of the taluk.

It is situated in the extreme south of Indian Peninsular. On its south the confluence of the three oceans such as Bay of Bengal, Arabian sea and Indian ocean on its West situated the state of Kerala and on its North the western ghats and on its East the Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu with an area of 1864 square kilometer. The river Tamiraparani flowing on it and make the land fertile further more Agasteeswaram witness vast agricultural land, dense forest with herbals plants towns, villages make it a wonderland. The sangam literature refer this region as Nanjilnadu; a land of splendor and prosperity.

This place has historical antiquity. Scholars said that it is the reminent of the lost Lemurian continent. Accordingly, there was a large mass of land to the south of Cape Comorin extending upto Indonesis, later swallowed by sea. Scientist argued that this part of earth is the oldest place on earth. This place maintains pleasant climate therefore scholars argue that, the earliest living being might have originated in this place. Further the Sangam literature makes reference about the existence of three Sangams. Among them two of them situated on in this part. In these Sangam several Tamil scholars sat together and did research on Tamil and brought out greater

volumes. In addition to that this place is considered the birth place of the Dravidian civilization.

Further this Taluk was a centre of historical and political activities from the ancient days. During the sangam age this region was under the control of Chera kings. Later it came under the influence of the Ay kings and subsequently it was ruled by Venad kings. During the early modern period this region came under the purview of the Travancore kings. As this region was ruled by different dynasties it was a centre of several wars and political movements.

In the same way as this region was surrounded by Ocean it was the centre of international trade. The sangam Literature has several references about the trans-Oceanic contacts of the Tamils. The literary references testify to the fact that it has greater amount of trade also. In addition to that it was centre of agricultural production. Nevertheless, there are references about cottage industries also. In simple it was centre of economic activities.

In the social field the caste system was very predominant. The upper caste people suppressed the rights of the low caste people. There were references about Untouchability. There were social evils like illiteracy, suppression of woman, superstitious believes etc. In order to protect the right of suppressive sections several social reform movements were initiated in this region. Christian missionaries came to India for the propagation of Christianity, shocked to see the amount of human right valuations. They initiated several steps to emancify the downtrodden section.

Similarly, in the cultural field it was center of Hinduism. Other religious sects such as Buddhism, Jainism, Islam and also Christianity spread there, Several Temples mosques and churches were constructed and each religion undertook their

religious activities systematically. As a result, several festivals and religious meetings were held in religion.

In simple this region was centre of historical, political, social, cultural activities from the ancient period. But no systematic research has been undertaken for highlighting the history of this region. If a systematic research is undertaken a concrete historical truth can be bring out. Therefore, in the present study “History of Agasteeswaram Taulk as gleaned from inscription” has been undertaken.

Objectives

1. To make an objective study on the political, social, economic, history of the region.
2. To trace the heritage of Agasteeswaram.
3. To analysis the legacy of Agasteeswaram.

Hypothesis

Inscriptions are the contemporary sources. Therefore, they are considered the primary sources. To find an objective history of the region the inscriptions must be taped and they should be used for writing history of the region.

Methodology

Descriptive and analytical method of knowledge will be followed in writing. Besides the available inscriptions the data collected from field study primary sources, secondary sources, rest evidence will be used for scientific study and objective interpretation

Other related works

Though there are some scholars wrote about the history of Kanniyakumari non-made any attempt to in study the history of Agasteeswaram indepth for example,

A book entitled Temples in Kanniyakumari District a book authored by Dr.S. Padmanabhan, narrated the history of temples constructed through out the district. But lacked in describing the history of Kanniyakumari, similarly the book authored by A.K. Perumal named 'then kumarien charithiram' (Tamil), also narrates religious and cultural heritage, but did not make any attempt to grace the history of Kanniyakumari. Likewise, in the Ph. D Thesis 'Christianity and social changes in Agasteeswaram taluk by A. Vanaja described the entry of Christian missionaries, spreading of the christianity and the social changes reforms introduced in Agasteeswaram. But failed to trace the ancient history of Agasteeswaram. Though Agasteeswaram has rich historical heritage none made any attempt to trace the historical heritage of Agasteeswaram. Therefore, there is avaccum in the history of Tamilnadu. Hence a research on this title is essential. In this research new chapter is to be added in the history of Tamilnadu. Therefore, this research is undertaken.

Sources

There are sufficient materials both primary and secondary are available for this study. The important primary source are the inscriptions that were engraved on the walls of temples, copper plates, monuments, etc.. They are contemporary and also free from corruptions. There are about five hundred inscriptions spread over this Taluk. They have been collected and published in the different volumes entitled Kanniyakumari district inscriptions published by the government of Tamil Nadu and also in the Travancore archaeological series. These inscriptions are contemporary in nature and free from corruptions and therefore reliable. In addition to that primary sources such as palm leaf manuscripts collected by field visit helps us to trace the history and heritage of this taluk. In addition to that the work s like 'Kanyakumar

district inscriptions of the Madras Presidency' volumes 1-V111 by T.A.Gopinatha Ayyar, K.Sivarama Krishna Sastri and R.Vasudera Poduval, Censes of India 1961, Volume-IX by P.K.Nambiar, State Manuel, by T.K.Velu Pillai, in four volumes and V.Nagam Aiyya in three volumes and 'temples of Kanniyakumari District', by S.Padmanabhan, Gazatteers of India, by M.Gopala Krishnan are taken in to account for this research.

In addition to this a greater number of secondary sources also collected from the libraries source of Tamilnadu and other states. The important secondary sources are books written n by eminent authors, Ph. D thesis, field work, Journals, Magazines, Newspapers, and personal interviews.

With help of the above sources an earnest attempt has been made to write the history of Agasteeswaram as gleaned from inscriptions.

Design of the study

The thesis has been arranged in seven chapters.

The first chapter has been allotted for "Introduction." In this chapter the introductory remarks, reason for undertaking research of on this topic, sources for the study, other related works, objectives hypothesis, limitation if any Chapterization etc... have been explained.

The second chapter the entitled "political history". This chapter deals about the geographical condition, Topography, flora, fauna the dynasties that ruled this region; the wars that waged, the administrative changes efferted etc. have been explained

The third chapter entitled "Economic history." This chapter explained the nature of the soil, irrigation, agricultural production, internal and international trade,

cottage industries and the economic condition of the people etc... have been explained.

The fourth chapter entitled “Spread of various religions history.” This region was a centre of different religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, and also Christianity. These religions spread from in this region and introduced great social and cultural changes that have been explained.

The fifth chapter entitled “Social systems and reform movements.” This chapter traces the social condition, social evils, suppression of women, social customs, social institutions, etc... and the steps taken to attain social equality have been explained.

The sixth chapter entitled “Cultural History” it deals about art, architecture, dance music literature, that flourished in this place.

The seventh chapter has been allotted for conclusion. In this chapter the research findings, suggestions and recommendations etc... have been given.