

The Social Stratification of Arani under the Vijayanagara Period: Mapping through Epigraphical Inscriptions

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Abstract

This article delves the social stratification of Arani under the Vijayanagar period mapping through the epigraphical sources. Arani has been stretches historical reminiscences and political scene genesis from Sangam age, carry over up to Nayak period. This land magnets numerous Kings and Kingdoms, and the feudatory utensil the power and glory to the goal of social beneficiation, to maintain the peace and harmony. For the movement of Deccan sultans to the Vijayanagar areas, it moves out from Andra Pradesh and Karnataka region to Tamil Nadu almost Vellore. It practically controls of the entire North Arcot region by the Vijayanagaras, also the Arani region. In this period, there were many gargantuan changes in the society which covered from 1362 C.E., to 1650 C.E., The development of Arani through economical and physiographical advances, which reached society into broad. Arani region has been highly populated due to urbanization through the economical prosperous, formed different types of social order, and it was classified of occupation, which were four-fold system different life and livelihood, attributed different language, religion and customs, spoken languages Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Saurashtra which reflected the nature of the society.

Keywords: *Vijayanagar period, Social stratification, Arani jagir, Historical reminiscences and Political scene, Arani silk and paddy.*

Introduction

Arani has been stretches historical reminiscences and political scene genesis from Sangam age, carry over up to Nayak period. This land magnets numerous Kings and Kingdoms, and the feudatory utensil the power and glory to the goal of social beneficiation, to maintain the peace and harmony. For the movement of Deccan sultans to the Vijayanagar areas, it moves out from Andra Pradesh and Karnataka region to Tamil Nadu almost Vellore. It practically controls of the entire North Arcot region by the Vijayanagaras, also the Arani region. In this period, there were many gargantuan changes in the society which covered from 1362 C.E., to 1650 C.E., The development of Arani through economical and physiographical advances, which reached society into broad. Arani region has been highly populated due to urbanization through the economical prosperous, formed different types of social order, and it was classified of occupation, which were four-fold system. The profession of weaving, Artisan work, Mercantile and Devaradiyar were the prominent in the Vijayanagar period. People of Arani have the different life and livelihood, attributed different language, religion and customs, spoken languages Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Saurashtra which reflected the nature of the society. This article delves the social stratification of Arani under the Vijayanagar period mapping through the epigraphical sources.

Topography

Arani has been flourished from Pallavas period, because the capital Kanchipuram rested near the region, which called as 'Thondaimandalam'.¹ After transfiguration of the period to the Chola control renowned as 'Jayankonda Chola Mandalam'.² Further it called as Padaivedu or PadaividuRajyamat the administration of the Sambuvaraya rulers. Later, Arani was named as 'Arani jagir' during the Vijayanagar period, but this name peaked during the Marathas control, and nomination the Jagirdara. Arani is located in North Arcot District and now it was existed in Triuvanmalai district. Arani is located in the coordinate 12° 40' 3" N latitude, 79° 17' 7" E longitude with the population of 62,858.³ Indeed, the geographical position of the Arani, with the benefit of the people over the years.

Brahmanas

During the Vijayanagara period, Brahmanas were placed the highest position in the Arani region. They were unique and independent in Education, Morality and Lifestyle this is due to their Vedic customs and daily habits. This led them to get highly respected by king and people. They served in rich positions such as Priests, Government officials, Merchants this is because kings hold high regard of Brahmanas. Some of them were Active politicians, able administrators and generals. Madhava and Sayana were Brahmana ministers. SaluvaTimma, Rayasam Kondamarasa and SaluvuNarasingaraya were the trustable political advisors of Krishnadevaraya. Saluvamangu acted as commander of Kumara Kampana. Brahmanas built their own social system and practices⁴. According to the inscriptional evidence found in Virunchipuram, it explains that Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Lata Brahmanas of Arani region together decided withdraw the dowry system and also Kanyadana was under the sacred law (Dharma) of Brahmanas⁵, they opposed the *Asura Vivahameans* payment from Bridegroom for Bride. The word Lataraja denotes people emigrated from Gujarat during Chola period. As point outing this, two villages named Ladavaram near Arcot and Ladambadi near Arni derived from the word "Lata"⁶.

The Brahmanas gained regal sponsorship in Chola rule. Tax free lands were also granted to Timmappaiyan who taught vedic scripture Rik-Sakha and Saivadirayar Vasantarayaguru who taught Yajuh-Sakha as honoring their services and learning. The tax-free housing site donated to Brahmanas like Agaraharam, Brahmadeyam and Chaturvedimangalam⁷. Brahmanas were also involved in agricultural activities and performed rituals in marriage. Sabha played major in local admistration of Brahmadeya villages. Bhattas and Visisthas were especially in Kaveripakkam Mahasabha⁸. In Padaividu inscription Sabhas mentioned in the name of Agarattu Mahajanas⁹.

Appaiya Dikshita from Arani Adaiyapulam was a notable identity of Dikshitaras. He was a Philosopher and Grammmarian, he had written Siddhanta Lesa Sangraha, Shivarkamnidipika and Poem-Apitakuchamba Stava. He was patronized by Chinna Bomma Naika and Venkata I¹⁰. In inscriptions Gurukkal were known in the name of TiruppatuOdukinraGurukkal¹¹. Hence, Brahmanas incessantly carried their Vedic Pursuits in PadaividuRajyam. The copper plate of Virupaksha mentions that he gifted village Alampundi and copper plate of Bukka clarifies he donated village Attiyur as tax free to Brahmanas¹². So, Brahmanas played a significant role in society and religious activities in this region.

Kshatriyas

Next in rank to Brahmans, the ruling class, the nobles, and military commander were considered to this group. These members of the ruling class were few in number. They also high-ranking officials in Government administration, brave military leaders and were skilled and competent managing all the department of the government¹³.

Agrarian Class

The Land holder's groups were emerged during 13th and 14th Centuries, their land management played vital role in understanding social formation during the period. The inscription mentions that Padaividu was a part of Thondaimandalam consisting *Valangai* and *Idangai* castes¹⁴. These castes were divided during Chola period. Jatis involved in Agricultural activities and categorized under *Valangai*. The other professions such as trade and crafts were under *Idangai*. The Agricultural works were mainly done by Vellalas and Tamil origin cultivators. Udaiyan, Araiyan, Alwan were the leaders of Vellalas and Kaniyalar was land owners¹⁵. Vellalas played significant role in agricultural activities. Vellalas involved in selling and buying of lands. According to Devikapuram inscription, the new fields were established by clearing forest and digging wells¹⁶. Another Agrarian class called Reddiyar was Telugu origin, settled in Padaividu. They were two divisions, Pangala Reddis and Panta Reddis¹⁷. Kannada farmers were also migrated from Karnataka and settled in Padaividu during Hoysala period.

Weaving Class

Weavers were next to Agrarian Class, Kaikkolas were foremost caste among Tamil weavers. The word Kaikkolan denotes the person handles shuttle. They had separate streets and also lived at temple surroundings¹⁸. Periyadankaran was hereditary headman of Kaikkolas who was aid under Gramini and Ural. Kaikkolas were mostly Saivites and involved in administration of temple and collecting tax from locals¹⁹. Kaikkolas territories were divided into seventy-two Nadu or desam which were categorized under four *Thisainadus*. Sivapuram, Thondaipuram, Virinchipuram and Sholingapuram were four thisainadus originated in Padaividu²⁰.

According to Eyyil inscription, Temple authorities advised Kaikkolas to establish a new street named Sribhandarinayakaperunderu in Devadana and to fix loom tax²¹. During 1383 CE the house sites were sold by assembly at Thirupanankkadu to Kaikkola Mudalis for 150 panams²², Kaikkolas were economically strong among everyone during the period. Tiruvannamalai inscription reveals that there were two separate street Kaikkolas. They gained many privileges of right-hand caste and Sanku, Tandu, Samaran. The major occupation of Kaikkolas was weaving but later some moved into agriculture and trade. The Kaikkolas were also known in the name of Mudali and Nayanars. Padaividu inscription records few more weaving castes such as Saligar, Niyayattur, Sedar, Seniyar, Samamudali and Koliyar. Kaikkolas majorly occupied the Arani surrounding after they entered into silk weaving.²³

Artisan Class

Another important class in Arani region was Artisan, known in the name of Panchallatar and Kammalas. There were five occupational divisions in Tamil Kammalas such as Kollan (black smith), Tachan (carpenter), Thattan (Gold smith), Silpasari or Kal-Thachan (sculptor or

stone manson) and Kannan (Brass smith). They worked in temple building works and lands were given as payment instead of money.²⁴ Every five divisions had a head called Nattamaikkaran in Kammalan class. They totally involved in temple construction and renovation works which includes making ornaments to deities. Kammalan artistry were involved in many temples at Arani region, Tirumalai, Padaividu, Virinchipuram, Devikapuram, Pallikonda, Kaveripakkam, Tiruvannamalai, Vellore and Gingee. Mulavigrahas and Utsavavigrahas are two types of idols made by Kammalas, one among them Mulavigraha were kept as permanent deities in sanctum sanctorum. The Eyyil inscription explains that 300 kuli's land was donated to Kollan, Tachan and Thattan.²⁵ Kammalans were under the left hand section and they mentioned them as Achari and Bhattas. These were nearly equivalent to Brahmanas and they also wore a holy thread. Kammalas enjoyed many privileges in Arani region which was mentioned in South Arcot Epigraph of 1632 CE.²⁶

Mercantile Class

The Hindus, Muslims and Christians were majorly involved in trading activities. The Hindu Chettis were divided into different categories in Padaividu region such as Komattis, KundiraiChettisetc. The inscription in Tiruvannamalai records about Chetti of Kodincenry Vaniyar,²⁷ Ennay Vaniyar, Ilaivaniyars, Kachavada Vaniyar, Beri Chettis, Ennai Chettis, Nattu Kottai Chettis, NagarattuChettis and KasukkarChettis.²⁸ In another inscription of Thirukkalukunram clarifies the Chettiers of Kavarai, Thachavadi Chetti, SekkuVaniyar and Senaikadaiyar. Brahmanas were also involved in trade and commercial activities.

Status of Women

The Hindu law according to the perspective of Manu, women in India was not treated right in independent way. Instead, they totally rely on men to live their life. Women depend on different men from their early age to old age, Father and Husband played vital role in controlling their life. The respect for women was never equal to men. Even in this situation higher caste women were in high desirable positions. Women involved more in religious activities apart from domestic works. The art of Temple at Virinchipuram in Padaividu Rajyam were highly appreciated by the women of Sambuvaraya Family. When ordinary women struggled for their rights, the women belonging to royal family experienced many privileges such as education and worship. In that period, it was blindly believed by people that women were born to serve men and they got treated as slaves.²⁹

Marriage

Marriage is considered as a major part of life among society. According to Dharma there were eight types of marriage, but no evidence to prove this. Only Kanyadana was explained in the inscriptions. During marriages the lands are given as dowry.³⁰ According to Mangadu inscription it is mentioned that should not give land as dowry. Lands were sold to conduct marriage. In Virinchipuram inscription Brahmanas in Padaividu decided to do marriage in Kanyadana type and the marriage with dowries were considered as Asura Vivaha.³¹ Sati and Childhood marriage were widespread during that period. Anyways there is no proper evidence to prove about Sati Arani region. Widows got treated worst among Hindu society and in literatures their names were mentioned as Kaimpenilai.

They were restricted from wearing gorgeous cloths, flowers and ornaments. Society considered them as bad luck and not let them to take part in Special events.

Devaradiyar

The Devaradiyars were a category of women who spent their life to serve gods. The inscription on Kilpakkam, it is mentioned that during 1548 CE a dancing girl was gifted to the temple Rajakkal-Nayanar Rajendra Chola Peruman by a person Sellappar.³² An inscription in Devikapuram records that Devadimai were donated by Ettappa-Nayaka to Tirumalai-Nayinar and PeriyaNachchiar temples during 1479 CE.³³ According to the inscription on Nedungunam near Arani region, 3 kani of land were gifted by Sonadri Ayyan to muttu, some of Devaradiyars belongs to Vaduga group and honored with special title Vijayaraghava-Manikkam during festival in Periyannan-Mandapa.³⁴ The inscription in Achirapakkam describes that Devaradiyars get emoluments for their work in form of Tirumeykaval, Parivattam and Odukkku at temples.³⁵ Another inscription in Devikapuram reveals that 29 Devaradimai donated by Ettappa Nayaka to Periya Nachiyar temple.³⁶

In Tirupanangadu inscription, records that the authorities of Tirupanangadu temple sold some housing sites to Devaradiyar during their financial crises. This inscription reveals about the high rich status of Devaradiyars among society.³⁷ Two streets called Mela theru and Kila theru in Thiruvannamalai fully occupied by Devaradiyars. The inscription of Krishna Devaraya in Thiruvannamalai elaborates about the ten days long festival called PeriyaTirunal. The presiding deity Annamalainatha of Thiruvannamalai was worshipped by many Saivaite Saints of Padaividu Rajyam by hosting flags and offering Pattadai to God. Devaradiyars financially supported Saivite Saints during this festival. Devaradiyars were highly skilled in singing, music and dance at Arani region.³⁸

Conclusion

The majority of the Kingship and Kingdom in Tamil Nadu and Arani region, the society was attributed the four-fold system. After King, the Brahmins were the supreme people who possessed the several benefits from the royals, in the form of land endowment namely *Brahmadeyam* and *Chaturvedimanglam*. Arani and its agricultural protects and crops cultivated rice very made agriculturalist existed more number, and urbanized. Then the establishment of Arani depends on the weaving business, which evolved the attribution of the weaving particularly silk sarees. Both agriculture and weaving impacted the social stratification over the years. Thus, the social status of Arani under the Vijyanagara period evolved from Pallava period to and continued the Nayak period, which attributed the same in Vijayanagara period.

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