

POLITICAL IDEAS AS GLEANED FROM MUTHTHOLLAYIRAM

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Abstract

Muththollayiram is considered to be one of the greatest works of Tamil literature. This work seems to consist of 2700 songs dealing with the pride and dignity of the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers respectively in 900 each. That is why it is named as Muththollayiram. This work consists of two parts namely agam and puram. It is not only the best Tamil literary work but also a very good historical source. It is a very good source to trace the history of the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers. This work is providing us with information regarding the flags, Symbols, Capital city, Conquests and details regarding the ruler, his valour, charity and character. The work Muththollayiram belongs to the kalabara period. But the authorship of this work cannot be fixed up accurately. It is a highly valuable poem from the point of the view of the historian. Thus we can conclude that even though the age and authorship of this work is not known, we can rely to a greater extent for historical studies.

Key words: Muththollayiram, Chera, Chola, Pandya, flags, Symbols, rulers

Introduction

The main aim of this paper is to gather the political ideas of Tamilagam under the Chera, Chola and Pandya rulers as per the historical literary work Muththollayiram. In this work we can find reference about the three great kings, their war polity, the valour of the king, his charity, the condition of the people, the prosperity of the land, the habits of the people etc., since this work describes the three kings as heroes of the poem (Pattudai Thalaivargal), we can very well gather the political condition that prevailed during the early period in Tamilagam.

Political Ideas Kingdom or State

By an intensive study of Muththollayiram we can very well gather some aspects of the three kingdoms and their rulers. The king was the Head of the state, enjoying full administrative powers. Every state possessed its own capital. The king ruled the state from his capital. The king had his own army. The greatness or the prosperity of the state is assessed by the king, his valour, his administrative capacity, the prosperity of the people his conquests and his victories. Each state has a flag as well as symbols, canopy, garland and sceptre are the symbols of a king. The flag of the Pandya has the symbol of fishes. The flag of the Chola has the tiger symbol and the flag of the Chera has the bow and arrow[1]. The capital city of the Pandyan country is Madurai[2]. Similarly the Chola and the Chera capitals are Uriyur and Vanchi respectively[3]. The Pandya ruler has been mentioned as Kudal Koman, Chola ruler as Uranthiyar Koman and Chera ruler as Vanchi Koman. The Pandya kingdom seems to be the greatest kingdom. Many petty chieftains were under the control of the Pandya king. They usually paid tributes to him[4]. Similarly the Cholas administer their kingdom from Uraiyur. The poet while

referring to the Chera kingdom is comparing it to the length and breadth of the sky. Even though the comparison is exaggerating, it is clear that the Chera regime is one among the greatest. However all the three kingdoms did several petty chiefs owe allegiance to them. Moreover the Pandya kingdom was rich in marine, the Chola kingdom has outstanding fertile lands and the Chera kingdom has rich hilly places.

Nadu or Country

Pandy Nadu has rich seashore which is famous for pearls. Korkai is the famous harbour of the Pandyas in which pearl fishery is famous. From Muththollayiram we can understand the beauty of seashore as well as gardens. The soil is rich, in which gold is available. The country has more books called Muththamil-nugal, from the sea beautiful pearls were found and the Pandya country is famous for rich elephants [5]. There were coconut and sandal trees in large quantity in Pandya country. The Pandya ruler is described as the chief of the Pothiyamalai (Hill) where the people used sandal trees to make fire for preparing food. Moreover we can see the sandal paste even the streets of Madurai the capital city of Pandyas. Thus the prosperity and fertility the Pandya country are described by the poet in the aforesaid manner.

Chola Country

The famous saying which comes to our mind when we think about the Chola country is Cholanadu Sordudaithu. The Cholanadu has a very fertile soil as well as water resources. The Chola country is famous for paddy. River Caveri is a main reason for its fertility. Due to the flow of the river Caveri, which is described as Caverippunal. The ruler of this area is called Punalnadar and Caverinadar. Paddy cultivation is very famous there and sound of removing paddy separately is a place called Kalam is referred to the sound made by the soldier to inform the war to the other soldiers of their regime. Lands called Maruthanilam is to be seen in Chola country. In the ponds of Maruthanilam and neighbouring places, fishes seem to be found in lot. Due to the flow of river Caveri coconut trees are to be seen there, and the coconuts are described to be upnormal in size and quality and quantity [6]. There are many ponds in Chola country in which the lotus, lily and kuvalai are to be seen. And these ponds, flowers, paddy fields and river Caveri beautifies the Chola country and gives a clear description about the prosperity and fertility of the county.

Chera Country

The Chera country has a fertile hilly region. Sandal is famous in Chera country. Ponds in which flowers called sevvambal malargal are to be seen add a beauty of the country. Vanchi the capital city of this nadu is portrayed as a beautiful and prosperous city. Coconut trees, sandal trees and elephants are abundantly noted here. From the above description we can very well understand the prosperity of the Chera country.

Kings

Kings Chera, Chola and Pandya were described as courageous, charitable who ruled for the welfare of the people. These rulers were very famous and were praised by the poets and the people. Through Muththollayiram which says about these rulers we can secure many interesting points about them. The king is considered to be divine by the people and the poet. The kings were compared with gods by the poets in their songs. The Pandya king is praised as Tamilar koman. The natal star of a Pandya king seems to be Uththiradam. During the birthday of the ruler he did not start any war [7]. The king ruled the people wisely and the people were very happy. The Pandya ruler has been described as

courageous, feared by his enemies even in their dreams. Moreover, when the white canopy was brought on the back of the elephant in a prosperous day to the war field which was a symbol to start the war. The enemies are the deputy rulers seem to pay their tributes to the ruler. That much the Pandya king has been a terror to them. The Pandya ruler who is described as courageous seems to be very kind hearted. In the war field in which he got victories he could not bear the sight of the dead bodies and cries of their relatives and closed his eyes it seems. He respected his enemies and even though they were defeated by him. He appreciates their valour. The Pandya king is said to have a very good and moral character. He visited the people in person enquire them personally and fulfilled their wishes.

The Chola king has been compared with god Thirumal. He is very courageous. He himself stood in the war front and preceded the war. In Muththollayiram he has been described more courageous than god Thirumal. The natal star of the Chola ruler is Revathi. On his birth day the Brahmins got gold and cows as present from the king. Ministers and poets got elephants. His birth day was celebrated by the people in a grand manner. In charity he has to be compared with the clouds which are giving the rain to the whole world. Thus from the above account we can conclude that the Chola king has been a good soldier, a good ruler and good donator.

The Chera ruler ruled very vast kingdom. He had several feudal lords under him. The Chera ruler has been compared with the moon and the feudal lords as stars. Because of all the characters the Chera ruler is compared with lord Siva.

People respected the rulers and in Muththollayiram the three kings have been compared with the god on the basis of their physical beauty their ruling capacity and their valour. In fame the Pandya ruler has been compared with lord Muruga by his subjugation of his enemies who paid their tributes to him with lord Siva and in his ruling capacity with lord Thirumal. In his fame, ruling capacity and wealth the Chola ruler has been compared with lord Thirumal. The Chera ruler has been compared with lord Siva in his valour and his administrative capacity [8]. Canopy (Kudai) and sceptre (Sengol) are the special respect for the ruler.

Victories of the rulers

The three rulers who have been mentioned in Muththollayiram seem to have been incomparable. They had under their control many feudal lords. Their enemies submitted to them voluntarily. There is no specific reference to their victories. The Chola ruler has conquered Kanchi, Ujjayni and Ceylon. The rulers seem to have visited the people after their victory in the battle and during the evenings. These visits are known as Ulas.

Titles

Generally Pandya is mentioned as Maran, Cholan as Valavan and Chera as Kothai.

The income of the government was spent on the maintenance of the army, donation to the poor, awards to the poets, Charity, endowments etc., According to Muththollayiram the army of the Chera, Chola and Pandya ruler consisted of four divisions namely Infantry, Cavalry, Elephantry and Charity. Their important war weapon is to be known as Vel. Thus we can conclude that the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas were courageous, brave and defeated their enemies, brought their countries under their control by which they extended their empire to a great extent.

Conclusion

Muththollayiram is rightly considered as one among the best historical work. It belongs to a period between 3rd century and 6th century A.D. This work is not only a very good tamil poem but also a highly valuable work from the point of view of the historian. Even though it does not furnish the personal names of the rulers the references made to their titles respectively indicate the point that this poem is dealing with the solid merits of the three prominent dynasties. It is considered to be a valuable work and is utilized by many prominent writers in different context.

Thus, we can conclude that even though the age and authorship of this work is not known we can rely on this work to a greater extent for historical studies.

Reference

1. N. Sethuragunathan, Muththollayiram, (Kazhaga veliyidu, Madras, 1958), pp.10, 175, 195.
2. Ibid; p.61.
3. Ibid; pp.161, 216.
4. Ibid; p.17.
5. Ibid; p.10.
6. Ibid; pp.168.
7. Ibid; p.12.
8. Ibid; pp.223-224.