

PERIYA KANDI AMMAN: THE GODDESS OF LITTLE TRADITION IN KONGU REGION

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Dindigul – 1

Kongunadu was one of the earliest territorial divisions and home of the ancient Tamil people. The Kongu region was ruled by the Cheras during Sangam Period. The western part of the region was under the Cheras and the eastern regions were ruled by the Pandyas. The medieval Cholas conquered most of the region in 10th century CE. Kongunadu comprises the modern day districts of Coimbatore district, Nilgiris district, Tirupur district, Erode district Mamakkal district, Karur district, Salem district, Dharmapuri district, Krishnagiri district and some parts of Dindigul district in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu.

Kongu Vellalar Gounders are predominantly an agricultural community residing in Kongu Nadu, a region in the western part of Tamil Nadu. The Kongu Vellala Gounder community is divided into more than 200 kulams or kootams. Various literatures refer to a different number of kulams or kootams.

Each kulam has its own kula Deivam and kula Guru. The tradition of Kula Deivam is widely practiced in these communities. Among them Goddess Periya Kandi Amman of Veerapur is 14km from Manapparai of Trichy district is very significant. There is a strange intricate tale about the Goddess Periya Kandi Amman who has a temple here. It seems once upon a time a five headed serpent did intense Thapas so that, the Goddess Parvathi would be born to him. The Goddess was born but she was born a eunuch, She did intense prayers to Lord Shiva, to get rid of this problem and asked her to do Lord Shiva, to get rid of this problem and asked her to do intense penance on a needle tip.

He told her that after some time , two brothers will fight and die here and their sister Arukkani would cure the problem of Periya Kandi Amman. He also sent six maids (Kannimar) to help her. When she started the penance it disturbed a sage called Veeramha muni. The sage understood that Periya Kandi Amman was Goddess Parvathi herself. So he came to the place where she was doing penance and became her guard. That are called ponnar and Shankar ruled over the place. Another king called Thalayur kali became very jealous of theses brothers. He knew the only way to win them is to make them fight with each other. He knew the only way to win them is to make them fight with each other. He sent his Goldsmith with a gold plated measure to the palace of Ponnar in the evening.

The gold smith said that measure was to be used to measure pearls to the chozha king. Since it was evening he requested the king to carefully keep the measure. He agreed and

kept in his pooja room. Due to the heat of the lamp all the gold melted and only a wooden measure was found the next day. When the king said that it was the measure given by gold smith, he asked to take bath in Vellangulam and take an oath before Ganesa there. He agreed. He entrusted the security of the place to Shankar. He requested sons of his aunt to guard the gate and asked his commander Sambuga to guard the town from outside.

As soon as he left the place Thalayaur Kali attacked with a huge army. Sambuga with twelve men killed all of them. Then Thalayur kali retreated and came with much bigger force. This time the three sons of the king killed them all. Thalayur kali went back and came with another huge army. Shankar drove them but was killed by Maya Kannan (Lord Krishna) who had come in the form of an enemy soldier. He told Shankar that, the life span allotted to him and brother was over and he was calling them back Mean while Ponnar get in to the pond to take bath. The Gold smith tried to kill him by throwing a big stone. Ponnar got out of the pond and killed the Gold smith, He returned back to see his dead brother. Then Maya Kannan appeared before him and told the purpose of his birth and also informed him that his time was over.

So Ponnar took his own sword and cut off his own head, His sister then came to the battle field crying, Kandi Amman heard this and sent her six maids to console her The maids made her as one of them and then became seven maids. She then went to see Kandi Amman. As soon as Kandi Amman met her she became a full female. Then Kandi Amman went to the battle field with this lady and gave new life to Ponnar and Shankar. Then they told, that their time in the earth was over and they wanted to go back to heave. They also told their sister that Periya Kandi Amman and her maids will look after her. When Periya Kandi Amman was doing penance, she met a man called Veera Sangan Poosari whose job was extracting honey from wild honey combs. He said to her “we do not keep up cleanliness and how can I offer you anything.” She it seems promised him that coming from him, she will accept anything. Afterwards, that Poosari made a temple with green palm leaves and consecrated her on the hill top.

Since it became difficult for him to walk that much distance, he brought Perya Kandi Amman and her maids to the plains and consecrated them in Veerapur. Since Kandi Amman is a strict vegetarian her temple is separate. In the month of Masi there is ten day festival To Periya Kandi Amman. The people of the clan of Ponnar and Shankar have taken one fist of mud from their temple and have established their temple in many places. Since Periya Kandi Amman fulfills all the prayers of her devotees, there is huge rush in her temple on all days.

References

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