

DARGHAS IN TAMIL NADU

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Abstract

*The dargha is a tomb or shrine of a beloved and noble person loved by the Muslims. In few places the Muslims build dargha in the name of the **Auliyas**, the close associates of god, as a memorial but they are not buried there. It indicates the popularity of islam as well as the significance of Islamic traditional architecture in the form of darghas. The dargha emerged after the attainment of popularity by the muslim saint of a particular area attained the status of holy or pilgrim centre The dargha also suggested the fact that the dead and gone people should be duly venerated with the erection of remember able monuments and the darghas are constructed in all the muslim penetrated and settled areas of Tamil Nadu.*

Key Words: *Muslim Saints, Devotees, Darghas, festivals and ceremonies.*

Introduction

Religion plays a prominent and significant role in the life of each and every individual for achieving prosperity and happiness. Islam is no exception. The deities installed in the Hindu shrines execute these things. In this regard it will be convincing to have the facts about the dargha is a prominent Islamic religious centre. Since the temples are places of worship for the Hindus, the churches for the Christian, the darghas are sacred centres for the Muslims where devoted worship is undertaken. So the darghas of the Muslims gain reverence, like their own religious centres.

Earliest Islamic Settlement

The peninsular India had its Islamic impacts even from the commencement of the medieval period i.e. after the eighth or ninth centuries. In the western Malabar coast, which became their earliest territories connected with them due to their commercial prospects became the Islamic settlements. The commercial intercourses which the Muslims had with the Pandiyan territories in the east coast of the Tamil country too paved the way for importing their own ways of life and to contribute a lot to the transitions in life, religion, art and architecture. In the east coast in areas like Keelakarai, Kalyalpattinam, Nagapattinam and other areas their settlements emerged. As the natives and Pandyan rulers were the patrons of commerce with the Muslim, traders they were able to pave the way for the establishment of Islamic settlements. So it will be convincing to have an analysis of the contributions of Muslims of Tamil Nadu.

Since the Muslims were all pious and religious minded people the Muslim traders were not at all exemptions. From the 9th century onwards, due to the patronage offered by Chola and Pandya rulers the Muslim traders established their settlements in those regions. At Keelakarai in the old Jumma Majid situated as the coast was the earliest centre in the eastern region. The tomb of Maqdum Lebbai Alim, a descendant of Abubucker Siddique was

a venerable teacher and well read scholar. His student Sada Kattulla Appa showed greater reverence to him, because he performed Hajj by walk.

Usual Practices in Darghas

The dargha the holy centre of the Muslims is venerated by all people who are pious minded. The dargha is a place appropriated for the execution of religious rites, rituals festivals and ceremonies. The Muslims prepare **victuals** a kind of eatable with **Fathia** and the Muslims distribute them to the public and Fakirs in the dargha itself. Food is prepared sufficiently with all kinds of materials. They carry sweet meats with them and distribute them to all the devotees who visit the dargha, with the desire to free themselves from the loudages misfortunes and worries of life. . The Annual festivals and the normal days are associated with varieties of ceremonies in the dargha. These kinds of rituals and festivals are arranged by the money offered as donations by Muslim devotees for the common welfare. Some of the dargha having Mosques, After the afternoon and evening prayers the **ulema** addresses as public lectures in the mosques on religious as well as social subjects. In some of the mosques a **Kuttab** i.e., an elementary school is attached mainly for teaching **Quran**. Vallal Seethakkathi's Jumma Majiid at Keelakarai is a standing monument in the characteristic form of Saracemic architecture,

In a separate hall in the Jumma Majid arrangements are made for offering Arabic knowledge at free of cost. A public library is also functioning form there in the left side of the entrance. In all Fridays the Hindu and Muslim devotees flock in large numbers.

Structure of Dargha

There is no proper and specific structure to dargha. The dargahs neither possesses **mihrab**, the semi circular miche of minber the seat at the top of the steps. They may or may not have a minaret. The darghas possess distinctive types of art features. The Darghas available in different parts of Tamil Nadu indicate the popularity of Islam as well as the significance of traditional Islamic architecture in the form of darghas. Mosques, the places of prayer of the Muslims are treated as places of prostration before god. Generally a mosque consists of a open space roofed and it contains **mihrab**, **minhar** and **minaret** attached to it. The **mihrab** is a semi circular miche reserved for the Imam who leads the prayer in the mosque. The **mimbar**, a seat placed at the top in the right side of the **mihrab** is utilised by the **Khatif**. The **minaret** in an elevated position is used by Muezzin, the one who announces the call for worship attached to the mosque. Mats and Carpets also cover the floor of the mosque,

Religious Centres of Muslims

There are some renowned darghas in Tamil Nadu. The Dargah of Sahul Hameed located at Nagore near Nagapattinam captivates the attention of the Tamils of various areas. They visit the dargah in large numbers. Masthan Sahib gul Muhammed, Sabir Ali,

Kappadah Sahila Jamman Sahib and others have caused the erection of number of darghas in and around Karaikkal. The dargah of Shaikh Dawood is situated at Muthupet in Tanjore district, The dargah of Auliya Shaikh Iman is available near Vedaranyam

Syed Abdul and Syed Abdul Razak are buried at Kodikkalpalayam near Thiruvavarur and there is a dargha. Like that at Kuthanallur of Tanjore district few darghas are built by Abdul Muhammad, Kottumoosa, Lukman Hakeem, Syed Hussain Appa and Khadar Masthan Appa. For Thabre le Alam Badshah a tomb is erected in Trichy. Another Dargha at Kajamalai in Trichy is situated for the Auliya Hajrath Khajee Syed Ahmadullah Shah shristis . Fakir Appa is buried and in that place at Siddharkottai near Ramnad there is a dargha.

At Piranmalai the dargha of Auliya Shaik Abdullah is a popular and sacred Muslim center. So the darghas found in different parts of Tamil Nadu not only exhibit the pious nature of the Muslims but also reveal their faith over their dead and gone ancestors. To maintain that they have built darghas and mosques above the place of their burial. The dargha at Muthupet the darghas at Kodiakkalpalayam and Kuthanallur, in Thanjavur district, the dargha at Khajamalai in Trichy, the Sithankottai dargha at Sitharkottai in Ramanathapuram district etc. are few other popular darghas of Tamil Nadu. The dargha of Anbiya Shaik Abudullah situated at Piranmalai is also a reverential one.

The darghas were constructed with specific motives of worship. The Trichy Nadhgar Valley dargha was constructed in memory of the visit of Nadhgar Valley (960-1039 A.D), the ruler of Syria to Trichy. The darghas have their own income and **Khadims**, the religious care takers, who perform spiritual duties. The darghas in Tamil Nadu assist the spread of Islamic culture and the Tamil Muslims are exposing their personal religious identities in attending the darghas regularly. The darghas preserve their routines without any interruption and it benefits the Muslims to keep up their own individualities. So the darghas of Tamil Nadu achieve religious as well as a social cohesion. The liberal and moderate methods adopted in the darghas by offering equal treatment to all living beings, place the devotees to live in peace and solace. So the darghas, as unifying forces, are venerated by Muslims, Hindus and Christians as sacred centres. No untoward incidents are allowed to occur inside the dargha on any account. The Sikkandar Dargha at Thirupparakundaram was constructed by Sikkandar Shah (around 1365 A.D) the last ruler of the Madurai Sultanate. It is a still venerable centre.

Dargha as Monument

Vallal seethakathi's jumma majid at keelakarai is a standing monument in characteristic form of saracemic architecture. Aroosiathul Katharia is a monument founded by Mappillai Lebbai mainly to promote Islamic knowledge and culture. It also is treated as a means for the attainment of salvation. The tombs of Kelvath Nayagam the son of Mappillai Lebbai Alim, Jalvath Nayagam and Shaigu Nayagam are also available there. In this residential religions substitution those who are fond of learning Arabic are provided

facilities with that along with free boarding and lodging. The Muslims of this area believe that they can get rid of their sorrows and problems by visiting this place.

The monuments of Takya shaheb, Pallakku Walliyullah, Sheikh Mohaideen Waliyullah Jamal Muhammed Walliyullah Syed Muhammed Dongha also are the attractive features of Muslim contributions to Tamil Nadu.

At Aroosia Takya or Aroosiathul Katharia in Keelakkarai there is the tomb of Sheik Kaldul Quadir Takya SAHEB. This scholar in Tamil and Arabic was born in 1779 at Kayalpattinam. He has authored more than 40 books both in Tamil and Arabic. He died in 1853 being a venerable saint and scholar Muslim devotees from various regions visit Keelakkarai to pay their homage to him.

Pallakku Walliyullah's dargha is another renowned Islamic centre at Keelakkarai. This is situated near the new mosque at Keelakkarai. Pallakku Walliyullah originally called Habeeh Muhammad Sadakkathullah, Born in 1851 A.D. he was the contemporary of Kalmath Nayagam and was a student under Mappillai Lebbai Alim for studying Arabic. The fascinated Muslims of Keelakkarai used to visit him frequently. They believed that his look will set aside all the physical and mental disorders of human beings. His life ended in 1942 A.D.

The Sheikh Mohaideen Walliyullah's Dargha is located in the east HAT of Keelakkarai. The people called Sheikh Mohaideen Walliyullah as Sheik Mudaliar. His father Naina Muhammad Walliyullah and his brother Abu Becker Walliyullah were the residents of Tondi. His other relatives were also the residents of living the area of the tomb. They also led a saintly life and captivated the devotees due their miraculous way of living. Arrangements are made to read the passages from Quran in an uninterrupted way. The devotees visit the Dargha on all the Thursday nights.

The Jamal Mohammad Walliyullah's Dargha is another significant sacred Islamic centre at Keelakkarai. Just adjacent to it there is mosque. He introduced the Sirtthiya Dargha (a branch of Katharia Dargha). Being a learned scholar he composed songs in Arabic language on Sheikh Abu Bucker Walliyullah of Tondi. This eminent Islamic saint who had an influence over the Muslims died in 1828 A.D. On every Thursday and Friday the Muslim devotees visit the dargha in large numbers. The devotees offer donations to the poor and needy in the name of Auliya. They believe that they will be generously rewarded for their arms.

The Syed Muhammad Dargha located at the entrance of Keelakkarai is another popular Islamic sacred centre. As he was the brother of Syed Ibrahim he is buried at Ervadi and a dome is erected in the middle. Like the Ervadi Dargah it is also a famous one. Muslims stay here for longer times to get the vision and grace of the Auliya. This is also a renowned Muslim monument.

From 19, March 1982, the Mohideen Andavar Mosque as Jamia Masjid is functioning at Sirkali. At the entrance there is an Arabic inscription of Imam Quadir Alhaj. This dargha maintains the status of Islam. The Masjid Dargha School is administered by the Mosque. At

Sirkali itself near the Railway station the Masjid Mohhammdiya Mosque is used by Muslims. This is a Wakf Board mosque.

Dargha and Communal Harmony

Saint Hazarath Syed Shahul Hameed Quadir Wali dargha at Nagore is a yet another renowned pilgrim centre for Islam. This dargha, built in the land donated by a Hindu ruler, stands as a symbol of Islamic affluency and communal harmony. Number of Hindu rituals such as applying sandalwood paste, tonsuring the head and pouring holy water in the Dargha, the recital of nadhaswaram and Shennai are performed. It is told that Saint Hazarath Syed Shahul Hameed, the 23 descendant of the prophet visited this place from Manikafur, near Allabahad. He had the abilities was able to cure the disease of Achuthappa Nayak, the Tanjore Nayak ruler in the 16th century and was rewarded by a land at Nagore. Thus Nagore became a renowned Islamic centre and the **Khandhuri** festival of this Dargha is famous even today.

The darghas are constructed in all the Muslim penetrated and settled areas of Tamil Nadu. This missionary activity was the subsequent and unique result of the commercial contacts with the Arabs and other Islamic countries. The darghas of Tamil Nadu render numerous public services associated with the socio, cultural and religious pursuits. They have infused belief, faith and confidence in life among the devotees. They also caused the emergence of rituals and traditions. Along with Muslims when the Hindus visit the darghas and mosques they remove the social disparities and discriminations. They assist to avoid the problematic racial differences. Even the mentally retarded are brought to the darghas at Nagore and Ervadi with the hope to remove in some condition. All are cured by their conversation with their internal mind. Thus the darghas serve as shelters for the self exiled people and also for those who suffer due to mental agonies cause because of materialism and family tortures. The dargha authorities assist all the people who visit the darghas for achieving peace, solace and happiness.

Every dargha has its own unique special and value. The devotees also believe that the barren women will get conceived by visiting and conducting prayer in the dargha from morning till evening. In vellore the women tie a rope in the dargha for getting their vows fulfilled. It is believed that this mosque was constructed in memory of Azrad Sydabi, who was able to cure the diseases of the ailing devotees who visited the dargha. This was constructed and completed on 21, September 1927, by Vellore Kosappettai Duraisamy Nayakar under the supervision of Kalavanpettai Kuppusamy Mudaliar. This is a standing monument for the cordiality and communal harmony which prevailed among different religionists in the Vellore city which commenced the Vellore mutiny against the British in the year 1806.

This dargha or mosque reveals the amicable and cordial relationship between the Muslims and Hindus as it was a traditional aspect among Hindus and Mappila Muslims. The

dargha also suggested the fact that the dead and gone people should be duly venerated with the erection of rememberable monuments.

Islamic Architecture in Dargha

Ervadi, a coastal village situated eight kilometres south of Kilakkarai, is having a dargha of Sultan Syed Ibrahim and dargha of Kattuppalli. These darghas are in the form of Indo Islamic architecture. Tiled roofs, arches, minarets, domes and framed structures. The dargha mosque is used to perform regular prayers. There are 17 tombs in the main building of the dargha. The Ervadi Dargah is treated as a spiritual sanctuary. Those who suffer because of mental illness are brought here and pray for recovery. When they were cured the faith of the devotees over this area increased.

At Periyakulam in Theni district there is the Nawab Jamia Masjid mosque. It is treated as a means of peace and prosperity Hindus and Muslims. It maintains unity among them. The Goripalayam Dargha at Madurai is also a symbol of religious peace and harmony. This is known as Haja Syed Sultan Samsudeen Auliya Dargha. It also houses the tombs of Muslim missionaries. It also serves as a healing centre of the patients. This dargha is a popular centre of Muslim architecture

The Kattubhava Pallivasal, i.e., the Kattubhava Dargha is situated in Pudukottai district 10 kms ways from Thirumeyam. Bhawa Fakruddin Aulia popularly or Arcot invites devotees of all religious. The Dargha known for its architectural glory attract large number of pilgrims for all parts of the region. The dargha literally means a shrine and a place of visit or pilgrim centre is the actual specimen of Indo-Islamic architecture.

Festivals in Dargha

One should remember that the sandal cover festival is a significant and prominent one in all the darghas. At times of festivals the procession starts from the houses of haktars or trustees. Which is a traditional custom followed by devotees.

The festival called **Sandanakudu** i.e., Sandalwood cover brings joy to the muslim people. The execution of it is executed in a ritualistic way. The darghas carry many names and stand to expose the different periods and history. Though the different darghas of various places came up at varied periods they are all maintained intact. During **urs** festival the Muslims attend the darghas in large numbers to commemorate the saints death anniversary. The **Kandhoori** festival is celebrated by the Muslims with all grandeur and earnestness. So they add up their religious devotion and bhakthi.

The festivals of the darghas coincide with Hindu customs and manners. For instance the commencement of the festival is announced by the hoisting of a flag. It is also announced by **Parai sarrudal** i.e., by a procession arranged by the authorities of dargha. This is a common practice in almost all the Darghas. Hence they reveal the co-operation and solidarity available among the Muslims and enable the darghas to serve as an unifying force.

Conclusion

In Tamil Nadu, the darghas are the standing monuments of Islamic faith and respectable sacred areas of the Muslims. They reveal the spread of Islam. They testify to the fact that even the converted Tamil Muslims contributed to the development of Islamic architecture by the construction of mosques and darghas. Further the darghas testify to the fact that a specific traditional form of worship by Muslims was executed in the darghas. Further the dargahs in Tamil Nadu render numerous public services associated with the socio cultural and religious pursuit .The dargahs in Tamil Nadu maintain a uniform standard of veneration by all, as a holy and sacred sport and serve as centres of religious unity and amity.

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