

## REFORM ACTIVITIES AND REFORM MOVEMENTS OF VAIKUNDA SWAMIGAL

**Dr. T. Jeya**

*Assistant Professor, Department of History  
Sri Meenachi Government College for Women, Madurai*

Vaikunda Swamigal was brought into the world in a Nadar family. His dad was Ponnumadan and mother was Veyilal. Ponnumadan was a palmyrah climber by calling. From his introduction to the world the kid showed some uncommon abilities and they saw some profound forces in the new conceived child. As steadfast enthusiasts of Vishnu, Ponnumadan and his family didn't care for the huge scope transformation of the Hindus to Christianity. Seeing the pitiable state of the Nadars and the low standing, they needed to change that and accepted that God will manifest in this world to destruct the shades of malice and secure the great. As the essence of the child was brilliant with a profound gleam individuals accepted that this kid was a manifestation of God. They imagined that their distresses and tears will reach a conclusion through this child. Seeing the magnificent appearance, they named the youngster as Mudi Sudum Perumal. As this meant a ruler, the high position Hindus protested it and carried it to the notification of the public authority. Consequently, the government provided a request quickly to change the name of the kid as per the station rules. In consistence with the sets of the public authority, his name was changed as Muthukutti. This presumptuous and tyrannical arrangement of the public authority and the disposition of the position Hindus hurt the sensations of Muthukutti which made a sensation of retribution to him.

### **Vaigunda Swamigal's Life and Career**

As there was no ordinary school, Muthukutti contemplated the puranas, and writings of different religions and good works with the assistance of the learned men of his town. Thirukural motivated him about balance and the specialty of good government. Harichandrapurana ingrained in him the influence of Truth.<sup>1</sup> Some occurrences which occurred in house and society assisted with animating the progressive brain in the kid from his youth. While he was four years of age, a duty authority Veerapathran Pillai from Agastheeswaram region came to gather the expense. He asked the neighborhood charge authority to pay 1122 panams for various assessments. The neighborhood charge authority mentioned him to gather the duty in portion. The brutal expense gatherer lost control and hurt the ear of the nearby assessment authority by utilizing the fire locks. The difficult circumstance truly hurt the psyche of Muthukutti.<sup>2</sup>

Like his folks, Muthukutti was an incredible Vishnu Bhakta. He took in the reverential tunes of Vishnu and directed day by day poojas in his home. Yet, he hated individuals who made penances. Love for domesticated animals was in his blood since he filled in as a cowherd in his initial days. He received the rule of work to live. He was extremely kind and extensive to the needy individuals. He treated the destitution stricken individuals and the tormented with milk of a human benevolence. He trusted in Dharma

and assigned a piece of his profit to take care of the poor.<sup>3</sup> He detested the severe treatment of the retrogressive individuals by the high ranks in conspiracy with the Government authorities and censured abusive assessments like talavari, velaipadivu, karailykanam, ezhutholai vari and different sorts of survey burdens that were removed from individuals by embracing coercive techniques. As an initial step, he needed to visit Tiruchendur and that was the defining moment in his life. On March 2, 1833, during the Masi Thiruvizha, Muthukutti and his family went for heavenly plunge in the ocean. Be that as it may, to the extraordinary disappointment of his family members, Muthukutti was found missing. On the third day, he rose from the ocean and said, "Presently I am not your child, but rather the child of Lord Narayana". He told individuals who gathered there that Narayana has offered resurrection to him as Vaikundar and deputed him to the Dakshina or South for the improvement of the discouraged individuals and to diminish them from abuse. Muthukutti underlined an unadulterated and autonomous life among the Nadars. He emphatically reprimanded the common Hindu social request and the exercises of the Nampoodiries. He was exceptionally serious in his analysis on the blunder and abuse of sanctuary cash. He mentioned individuals to surrender the underhanded practices in their love. His proclaiming against the overarching strict request brought out significant change in the disposition of the low position individuals. Muthukutti then, at that point got back to his local spot and played out various supernatural occurrences on his bring venture back. The low station individuals tensely invited Muthukutti and thought about him as their chief while the high position Hindus went against him and attempted to disallow him from going into their towns. In a few spots, he was assaulted by the station Hindus and the Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

In a specific town, the standing Hindus assaulted him since he had washed his legs in the lake that was only for the utilization of position Hindus. In another town, Muslims tossed stones on him since he got through their road. Bhagavan Muthukutti Swamigal encouraged his adherents to surrender every one of the strict functions which were normally rehearsed in the sanctuaries. In 1833 A.D., Swamigal began contemplation at Poovandararthoppu. For the initial two years, he pondered in a six feet honor pit called Yoga dapa. During this period, he took just fluid food and organic products. For the following two years, he strived hard and thought for the abrogation of standing framework. The rank Hindus disdained his contemplation and endeavored to disturb the retribution and to dissipate the ubiquity of Muthukutti. Anyway Muthukutti Swamigal finished his four years compensation without disapproving of the resistance. He invited all the lower station individuals who swarmed to his place. Thus, a great many lower rank individuals came from everywhere south and adjoining places and addressed their complaints to Muthukutti who kept on reassuring them. Thus, they adored him as the genuine manifestation of Lord Narayana and called him as Vaikunda Swamigal.<sup>5</sup>

### Change Activities of Swamigal

Vaikunda Swamigal heard the complaints of individuals and aided them in all conceivable manners. By his supernatural force, he restored their illnesses and prompted them the approaches to have a solid existence. He relieved the various sicknesses like mental

problems and different hardships like visual deficiency, deafness, loss of motion and skin infections. The capacity of Swamigal appears to have been amazing to such an extent that he had the option to mend by giving blessed soil and water. His demonstration of mending pulled in large number of individuals all around the South. Individuals brought their sickfolk to him and petitioned God for their recuperation. In his proclaiming he underlined Charity, Truth, Love and Self regard among individuals. Vaikundar energetically assaulted Swathi Tirunal (1829 – 1847), the Raja of Travancore for his carelessness to present government assistance of the helpless low station individuals. He called Travancore ruler as Ananthapuri Neechan and reviled Brahmins as Karineechanmar (Black miscreant). He denounced British individuals as Venneechan (White con artist).<sup>6</sup> He needed the removal of the dominant Raja. The discourses of Vaikundar against the Raja procured the enmity of the great rank individuals and the Government.

Envy over the prevalence of this deliverer, the station Hindus coordinated a plot to kill Vaikunda Swamigal by giving noxious food, yet he got away from the plot through his phenomenal force. Then, at that point, they appealed to before Swathi Tirunal. The ruler heard their complaints and organized an enquiry at the Suchindram Temple Mandabam. The position Hindus announced every one of the exercises of Vaikunda Swamigal and mentioned his prompt capture and concealment of his new development. The Raja who heard the request sent his military to Poovandarthoppu to capture Vaikunda Swamigal. At the point when the military arrived at Poovandarthoppu, the adherents of Vaikunda Swamigal accumulated in enormous numbers, gone against his capture and ready for an open battle. However, Vaikundar advanced them to stay patient. The fighters captured him and seriously beaten him. On this assault, the individuals who detested Vaikunda Swamigal manhandled him by utilizing dirty words and embarrassed him to the most extreme.

Be that as it may, nothing could vacillate him. The Raja comprehended that there was a heavenly force in him. Consequently, he needed to test the heavenly force in him. He posed a few inquiries to Vaikundar. In case you are a master, determine what is in my grasp?. But Vaikundar wouldn't address any of his inquiries. The Raja speculated the heavenly force and requested to detain Vaikunda Swamigal. During his detainment as well, huge number of enthusiasts raced to Trivandrum. Indeed, even at this basic point, Vaikunda Swamigal proceeded with his work of lecturing and recuperating. Hordes of individuals assembled there went through their days with Vaikundar and revered him as their God. Indeed, even in his detainment, Vaikunda Swamigal was exposed to a few brutal medicines by the public authority authorities and the Maharaja. He was put inside a lime-furnace, in the enclosure of hyena and furthermore in the midst of fire. Be that as it may, Vaikundar got away from this load of torments safe. Finally the Raja chose to deliver Vaikunda Swamigal depending on the prerequisite that he ought to engage just the individuals from his own local area. In any case, he wouldn't make any revelation and he tore the imperial request into pieces. The Raja at long last arranged the arrival of Vikunda Swamigal on the main seven day stretch of March 1839, after a detainment of 110 days. In the midst of celebrating his adherents took him to Nanchlinadu in an extraordinary parade. Vaikunda Swamigal then, at that point proceeded with his change exercises and sent his kin to atonement and

prepared them about their method of another autonomous life that Dharma Yuga should come instantly. Actually the for him rule of Dharma Yuga made him an extraordinary humanist.

### His Reform Movements

The strict changes of Vaikunda Swamigal were firmly connected with his social change development. The explanation is that, in the early piece of the nineteenth century, social change was connected immovably with strict change with the happening to Vaikunda Swamigal, another arrangement of Hinduism has showed up in the strict history of Travancore. As religion is entomb connected with the general public Vaikunda Swami understood that the lone answer for change society is to change the religion. So he chose to begin his change exercises from the strict exercises itself. As the initial step of his strict change development, Vaikunda Swamigal raised his voice against the Brahmin's sanctuaries.<sup>7</sup> Immediately after his disclosure at Tiruchendur, he lectured against the Muruga sanctuary of that town and straightforwardly reprimanded the Nampoodiries. He guided his kin to forsake all their strict functions regarding this temple.<sup>8</sup> He censured the useless customs, elaborate rituals and costly services.

He introduced his kin to offer kanikkai, to convey kavadi and frankincense and natural products. He additionally assaulted and denounced any remaining methods of love. He additionally scrutinized and denounced the organization of Devadasi that was by and by in the sanctuary Vaikunda Swamigal assaulted every one of the ceremonies in the Padmanabha Swami Temple. Like other change developments of India in the nineteenth century, Vaikunda Swami censured icon love. Just before his development, the lower rank individuals revered their divine beings as symbols or pictures. Since they had no sanctuaries for their love, the icons were white washed and put on side of the road. He considered this sort of love as an ignoble savage custom and consequently stringently disallowed his kin to venerate the pictures. Also, Vaikunda Swamigal censured creature penance. In any case, in contrast to other people, he improved on his convention against the creature penance.<sup>9</sup> As it was a time of odd notions, individuals put stock in creature penances to avert underhanded impacts of the divine beings.

Vaikundar saw the strict traditions like creature forfeits and sprinkling of blood during love. He considered these disasters as savage. So he offered his adherents to surrender this type of love. In result his adherents rigorously received the standard of Vaikunda Swamigal and surrendered the creature penances in course of time. Vaikunda Swamigal likewise pursued a methodical conflict against devilworship. The Nadars like other lower positions had various fiend sanctuaries or pey-kovils. Their steadfast faith in the detestable powers made their life truly hopeless. They accepted that the illnesses are caused because of the anger of the evil spirits. Subsequently to assuage the divine beings and to escape from the rage of their god, they made abundant contributions. Vaikundar endeavored to liberate individuals from the grip of the devil divine beings impact of the abhorrent spirits. He announced that he had consumed every one of the villains with the force he had and in this manner ingrained trust to them.

Vaikunda Swamigal expected the situation with Ayya (Father) to every one of his devotees. His supporters are for the most part called Ayya Vazhi Makkal. They asserted that the love of Vaikundar is actually a love of the Supreme Being. The low standing individuals happy with the love of their Ayya and felt that there is no need to love in the Brahminical Temples which were totally under the hold of high ranks. To keep up with deference, he supported to wear turban on their heads which was generally worn around their midsection to show veneration to the high standing. Vaikunda Swamigal gave equivalent significance to the financial existence of individuals. He was of the assessment that the middle class ought to be given sensible installment for their work. He guided individuals to work for the installment that they get. He energetically denounced the abusive and unpalatable tax assessment. He requested the Raja from Travancore to cancel every one of the offensive medieval tolls like the oozhiyam and viruthi.<sup>10</sup> He exhorted his local area individuals to surrender the lavish strict customs and services.

The social change development of Vaikunda Swamigal acquired wide spread ubiquity among the low standing particularly among the Nadars. His standards of casteless society, solidarity surprisingly are totally trailed by the Nadar people group that repeated among individuals of other lower request. The social request of the Hindu Society went through sweeping changes because of the impact of Ayya Vaikunda Swamigal. It guided a basic soul in the personalities of the abused class. The Nizhal Thankal that Vaikunda Swamigal implanted social awareness among the Nadars. Vaikunda Swamigal turned into a wellspring of motivation for the low standing individuals to battle for their privileges and advantages. This empowered the abused class to dispatch their battle for equivalent rights in the method of their dress and love. He additionally incited Sri Narayana Guru to dispatch a change development to assuage the Ezhavas from the mistreatment of the great station individuals.

### **Day to Day Life of Vaikunda Swamikal**

Vaikunda Swami was brought into the world in a poor Vaishnavite family in 1809 at Sastankovila, a little town in South Travancore, found a couple of kilometers south east of Nagercoil. The town is today known as Swamitoppu, after Vaikunda Swami. Before long his introduction to the world, his folks named him as Mudichudum Perumal, since Perumal was a selective addition utilized by special standing Hindus after their names. There was request from them to change the name. Mudichudum Perumal was hence given another common name as Muthukutty. Muttukutty's youth was spent in the town pial school, learning strict and moral messages like Naladi, Thirukural and Thiruvasagam.<sup>11</sup> Born in an amazingly strict family, where petitions were held each day, he likewise turned out to be knowledgeable in Hindu legends. Altogether, during this period, he took in the Bible and became capable in Christian instructing. It was even asserted by a Church student of history that Muthukutty was a Christian for quite a while. At the point when he arrived at the age of 22, Muthukutty took a journey to the popular Murugan sanctuary at Tiruchendur in Tirunelveli region to go to the Masi celebration and to get restored of a skin torment from

which he was languishing.<sup>12</sup> After a blessed shower in the ocean at Tiruchendur, he guaranteed Vishnu had given him a resurrection as his child.

Muttukutty expected the new name of Sri Vaikundar. He proclaimed that he was destined to rescue the Shannars and to set up the standard of dharma. He got back to South Travancore and started doing atonement which proceeded for a very long time. During the initial two years of the repentance, he sat inside an uncovered pit that was six feet down and for the following two years he wore just torn garments, never addressing anybody and remained alive exclusively on milk. This was the period when he became well known and individuals from different positions visited him. His acclaim became far and wide on account of the conviction that he could fix the wiped out. In his preachings, he dispatched a hostile assault on the customary Travancore society and its rulers. He censured the state for gathering exorbitant assessments from the lower position individuals. At the point when the King Vanji Balarama Varma visited Suchindram, the special position Hindus educated him that a Shannar was professing to be the manifestation of Vishnu and had taken steps to build up his standard over the nation and offered everlasting status to the Shannars.<sup>13</sup> The King was likewise educated regarding the between feasting advanced by Vaikumda Swami without rank differentiation. Altogether, Vishnu at Sri Padmanabhaswami sanctuary at Trivandrum was the managing divinity of the Travancore regal family. The King got Vaikumda Swami captured and brought to Trivandrum. While heading to Trivandrum as a detainee, the favored standing individuals manhandled and offended Vaikunda Swami and tossed stones at him. The King attempted to interrogate Vaikunda Swami regarding his divine nature, yet the last would not reply. At long last, he was kept as a detainee at Singarattoppu, an outdoors jail in the western side of the Sri Padmanabhaswami sanctuary at Trivandrum. His detainment drew countless his supporters from the Nanjinad district of South Travancore to far off Trivandrum. In the jail, he was said to have been compelled to go through difficulties of various types. He was accepted to have been kept as a detainee in a limited soiled room and dried chillies were singed inside the room. He had to stroll ablaze, he was tossed into a hot lime heater and furthermore put inside a pen with a tiger.<sup>14</sup> He endure this load of difficulties, which were taken as a proof of his additional human credits.

The King requested that he give a Kaicheetu (composed endeavor) that he would carry on his central goal just among individuals of his own rank. However he would not give the Kaicheettu, he was finally delivered from the jail during the principal seven day stretch of March 1838. He got back to Ampalapathi in a parade comprised of his euphoric devotees. During the excursion, he was conveyed in a support by his aficionados and the support is as yet held as an article at Swamutoppu.<sup>15</sup> His central goal proceeded for an additional twelve years. Proclaiming of Vaikunda Swamy and the ceremonial practices articulated by him had two essential perspectives. At one level, he attempted to modify the society Hinduism of the Shannars and cause it to stick with that of the favored stations. At another level, he tested the station based imbalances endured by the Shannars and vowed to kill the Kaliyuga and usher in a brilliant time of Dharma. How Vaikunda Swami changed the custom and strict acts of the Shannars is to be seen first. Vaikunda Swami as a matter of first importance educated his devotees to surrender demon love and symbol love.<sup>16</sup> He

guaranteed that he had effectively consumed every one of the demons and taken way the mantras (enchanted manifestation) utilized by the Kanikars (neighborhood slope individuals) to drive the fallen angels away. He likewise asked them not to offer penances of goats, chickens and pigs to the gods.

Not only creature penances, he lectured no other contribution like eggs, singed meat and neighborhood edibles like ponkal, murukku, paniyaram, avalurundai and kadaipal were requested by the divine beings. He set up basic hovel like construction in seven places in particular Chettykudiyirrupu, Agastiswaram, Palur, Sundavullai, Kadampankulam and Pampankulam where this load of preachings were rehearsed. These constructions were privately known as Nilai Tankals or Inanthankals where strict customs and icon love were precluded and contributions from the fans were not acknowledged. Aside from taking care of poor people, these spots of love, where station put together limitation with respect to section was not forced as a standard, were utilized for proliferating the standards of Vaikunda Swami.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, an individual supplication was not held in Nilai Tankals, yet just mass petitions confirming the communitarian direction of the clique. Over the course of the years such Nilai Thankals had multiplied in number and some of them served as town schools. As much as Nilai Tankals, the organization of Tuvaial Panthi set up by Vaikunda Swami was likewise significant. Tuvaial Panthi was a bunch of training which was basically intended to set up the significance of tidiness and basic food and it was first presented at Vagaipathi close to Kanyakumari. The lovers who took part in Tuvaial Panthi needed to clean up threefold per day and wash their garments prior to going to Vaikunda Swami's talks. They needed to surrender their typical admission of fish, which the Shannars were fanatically enamored with and drink slop made rice and green gram. Various families partook in Tuvaial Panthi and it was guaranteed that at a certain point, 700 families took part in it. The standard of neatness engendered through Tuvaial Panthi appeared to have become an overall standard to the individuals from the faction.<sup>18</sup>

To put it plainly, the religion proliferated a few practices, for example, surrendering demon love and creature forfeits and embracing tidiness and vegan food which were all important for the special station Hinduism in Travancore. This was a work to overcome any barrier between the people Hinduism of the Shannars and the first class Hinduism of the advantaged ranks. The lone special case for this was Vaikunda Swami's resistance to icon love which may be because of the impact of Christianity and his endeavors to wean away his supporters from the various society gods who were revered in symbol structure. Vaikunda Swami continued on to the position on station based imbalances and sufferings of the Shannar and other unprivileged ranks. Most importantly, Vaikunda Swami in his preachings went against the over the top duties and the Ooliyum administrations forced on the Shannars by the Travancore King. He portrayed the Travancore ruler as neesan (oppressor) and encouraged his supporters that if a Shannar lady reviled the King consistently, the lord would bite the dust. He guaranteed except if the lord reported through drum thumping that the Shannars were soothed of Ooliyum administrations, he would lose his entitlement to run the show. Essentially, he went against the forswearing of right to Shannar ladies to wear shoulder fabric. He requested that his devotees wear a turban while

entering his place of love. It very well might be noted here, Shannars were restricted from utilizing turbans and even while conveying headloads they were allowed to utilize just a lot of dry feed and palm leaves privately known as chummadu, on their heads. The act of wearing a turban while entering the sanctuary actually proceeds at Swamitoppu.<sup>19</sup>

He guaranteed his adherents that he would eradicate the Brahmins and when the Darmayuga got set up in the spot of the present Kaliyuga, there would not be any differentiations among people and the world all in all future administered under one umbrella by a Benevolent King. The Vaikunda Swami religion with regards to how the goals of the Shannars to undermine the force structure which became lucid because of the socializing mission of the congregation was supported in and attacked by the advantaged rank in South Travancore. As has effectively been noticed that the goals explained by the devotees of Vaikunda Swami and by the Shannar Christian proselytes were not considerably unique. Regardless of this, the Christians incited the rage of the favored rank Hindus, while the followers of the Vaikunda Swami religion moved away unassaulted. This distinction focuses to the way that Vaikunda Swami Cult worked as a mask embraced by the subjected Shannars to get away from counter and simultaneously to explain their desires.<sup>20</sup>

He found a way striking ways to free his kin and remained against the universal perspectives on Hinduism. His voice against rulers, in balance in the public arena and for the womenfolk were the new parts of the South Travancore renaissance. He showed modesty, pride, helping poor people, love and so forth that carried new life to the general public. His instructing against icon love, ceremonial penances gave an extraordinary hit to the Brahmins and request of the general public. He made it express that blossoms would do to adore god. This antagonistically affected the economy of Brahmin clerics. Simultaneously the admirers discovered alleviation as far as economy before their love.

### End Notes

1. John A. Jacob, *Then Thiruvithankoor London Missionary Sanga Charitram 1806-1856*, (Tamil), Nagercoil, 1956, p.61.
2. Darwin, *Munnetam*, Trivandrum, March 2006, p.9.
3. *London Missionary Society Report*, Nagercoil Mission District, 1864, p.4.
4. Agur, C.M., *Church History of Travancore*, Madras, 1903, pp.585-586.
5. Amalan, N., *Vaikunda Mahatmiyam*, Swamithoppu, p.12.
6. Esthak, I., *Mathru Bhoomi Weekly*, February 12, 2006.
7. Wadia, A.R., *History and Philosophy of social work in India*, Bombay, 1961, p.34.
8. Samuel Mateer, *Land of Charity*, London, 1871, p.222.
9. Dalton, W.H., *Missions in India*, London, 1854, op.cit., p.98.
10. *London Missionary Society Report*, Santhapuram Mission District, 1864, p.6.
11. Raman Pillai, C.V., *Marthandavarma*, Trivandrum, 1953, p.86.
12. Ponnu, R., *Vaikunda Swamikal Valvum Vazhikattalum* (Tamil), New Delhi, 1983, p. 4.
13. Sarveswaran, Sri Vaikunda Swamikal, *A Forgotten Social Reformer of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1980, p. 3.