

Chapter II
Style of the Temple Art and
Architecture

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STYLE OF THE TEMPLE ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Inscriptions help us to know the political, religious and social status of a country. These inscriptions are in written Brahmi, Vengi Pallava, Telugu Kannada, Grantha Tamil, Vatteluthu, Malayalam, Koleluthu, Nandinagari etc. Twelve books have been published under the title of 'South Indian Inscriptions'. The inscriptions in them help to know the history of Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagara and Nayaka kings, who ruled the study area.¹

The Ashoka period inscriptions, with Brahmi characters, were engraved to spread Buddhist religious principles to the people, and the later charters and inscriptions were written when donations such as land donations were made to warriors and temples.² It is a practice in our country to carve valuable details in stone and place it in a public place like a temple where it can be seen by many people. The practice of erecting a stone for a warrior who died in battle and carving his name and special features under it, is mentioned in *Tolkapiyam*.³

It was an ancient custom of the king to grant villages or lands to Brahmins and learned scholars, who were highly respected by the government. Such grants were marked on the copper plates. The *Mayitavolu* plate, issued in the early 3rd Century A.D. by Shivas Gandavarman, a Pallava prince, was written in Prakrit.

After the Prakrit plates, vernacular language was used by the Pallava dynasty. Among them, the *Kooram* copper plate, credited to Paramesvaravarman I, is the most

¹ Dr. Rasamanikkanar M, *Thamizhaga Kalaigalum Kalvettukkalum* (Chennai: Pavai Publications, 2011), p.115

² Kramrisch Stella, *The Hindu temple* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidars, 1987)

³ Murugaraj A, *Vijayamangalam* (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.98

descriptive. Velvikkudi and Chinna Mannur copper plates are the best examples of Pandya kings.

Art and Architecture of Tamil Nadu

The rock-cut shrines at Mahabalipuram, from the Seventh Century are the earliest examples of Tamil Dravidian architecture. According to scholars, the lack of monuments in South India, before the 7th Century, was due to wooden temples, that were eventually destroyed by natural forces. In Tamil Nadu, temple architecture developed over a period of five centuries: the Pallava Epoch (A.D. 600 - 850), the Early Chola Epoch (A.D. 850 - 1100), the Later Chola Epoch (A.D. 1100 - 1350), the Vijayanagara Nayak Epoch (A.D. 1350 - 1600), and the Modern Epoch (After A.D. 1600).⁴

Pallava Epoch

Temples, made of rock, were replaced by free standing structures during the Pallava Era. Rocks were first carved to the required design to construct rock cut temples, which were then constructed by cutting rocks. Mahendravarman, a Pallava king, is credited with introducing the rock cut architecture. The first temple he built out of rock was Mandagapattu. The front of the rock cut cave structure is supported by two pillars. Every cave temple has a straightforward sanctum, that is cut out of the wall's back, side with a frontage protruding mandapa (pavilion).⁵

There are two dwarapalas on either side (gatekeepers). After A.D. 700, this cave architecture entered a declining stage and it was replaced by large structural temples. Narasimhavarman II of the Pallavas constructed the Shore Temple known as the Seven Pagodas, in Mahabalipuram. It is South India's oldest structural temple. Instead of using a single rock block as in the past, rock blocks were used to construct the structural temples.⁶

⁴ Nilakanta Sastri K.A, A History of South India: From Prehistoric Times to the Fall of Vijayanagar (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1955)

⁵ Srinivasan K.R, Temples of South India (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1972), p.39

⁶ Adam Hardy, The Temple Architecture of India (New Jersey, USA: John Wiley & Sons, 2007)

The Kanchi Kailasanatha Temple was constructed by Narasimhavarman II, also known as Rajasimha. Nandivarman II constructed the Vaikuntha Perumal Temple in Kanchipuram.⁷ Mahabalipuram (Mamallapuram) was not made of caves, but rather of cut stones.⁸ There are two shrines, one for Siva and the other for Vishnu.

The Pancha Pandava Rathas, which include Draupadi Ratha, Dharmaraja Ratha, Bheema Ratha, Arjuna Ratha, and Nagula Sahadeva Ratha are rock cut monuments that serve as examples of the Tamil Dravida tradition.⁹ The exterior walls of the rathas are ornamented with niches and motifs, particularly those of Arjuna, Bhima, and Dharmaraja. The sculptures of gods, goddesses, monarchs, and scenes from mythology are displayed in the niches. Granite boulders face a magnificent relief sculpture, called the Arjuna's Penance, that is approximately 100 feet long and 45 feet high.

Early Pandya Temples

The Pallavas and early Pandyas lived at the same time. The Pandyas, in contrast to the Pallavas, erected gods in the sanctums of their cave temples. There are more than fifty cave temples, scattered throughout the Pandyan Empire.¹⁰ The most significant ones can be found in Trichirappali, Anaimalai, Tiruparankundram and Malaiyadikurichi. Siva, Vishnu and Brahma were placed in these caves. In the Pandyas, Siva temple, the linga is carved out of the mother rock. Nandhi's figure is also carved into the rock. In the sanctum, the Sivalingam is positioned in the middle. A drainage canal can be found in the sanctum. There is no consistent ornamentation on the pillars. Bas relief images of Siva, Vishnu, Durga, Ganapathy, Subramanya, Surya, Brahma and Saraswathi are carved out of the back side walls' four niches. Dwarapalas are depicted on either side of the sanctum.

⁷ Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, *Koila Kalai* (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.76

⁸ Sivaramamurti C, *Mahabalipuram* (New Delhi: Archaeological survey of India, 1992), p.2

⁹ Shankaranarayana Rao A.V, *Temples of TamilNadu* (Chennai: Vasana Publications, 2012), pp.152–53

¹⁰ Raman K.V, *Pandiyar varalaru* (Chennai: Tamil Nadu Textbook and Educational Services Corporation, 1977)

The Pandya architecture includes significant rock cut and structural temples. The unfinished Kazhugumalai Vettuvankoil Temple is an impressive example of the rock-cut style. At Kazhugumalai, a monolithic temple, known as the Vettuvankoil, was carved out of a huge boulder on four sides. Sculptures of Uma Maheswarar, Dakshinamoorthy, Vishnu, and Brahma can be found on the temple's roof.¹¹ Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli and Meenakshi Amman Temple in Madurai are two examples of Pandya's architectural design.¹²

Sculptures

The gods and goddesses are depicted in bas relief on the cave walls. The sanctum walls in structural temples are devoid of any image decorations.¹³ Sculptures can be found on the pillars and superstructures. The sculptures have elaborate shoulders, lean bodies, lovely ornamentation, and tall crowns, giving them a majestic appearance.

Bas reliefs of numerous gods, including Siva, Vishnu, Brahma, Parvathi, Subramanya, Ganapathi, and Dakshinamoorthy can be found in Tiruparankundram, Anaimalai, and Kazhugumalai. Many early Pandya images were discovered in and around Madurai and they are housed in the Tirumalai Nayakkar Museum in Madurai.¹⁴

Paintings

Outstanding early Pandya paintings can be found in the caves at Sittanavasal, which is 15 kilometres from Pudukkottai, and at Tirumalapuram in the Sankarankovil Taluk of the Tirunelveli District. The Jain monks' residence can be found in Sittanavasal.¹⁵ They used fresco painting to decorate the walls. Sadly, we no longer have many of those

¹¹ Sivaramamurti C, Kalugumalai and early pandyan rock cut shrines (Bombay: N. M. Tripathi Private Ltd, 1961), p.25

¹² Nagaswamy R, Tamizhaga Koil Kalaigal (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 1973), p.39

¹³ Crispin Branfoot, "The Architectural Sculpture of the South Indian Temples, 1500-1700", *Artibus Asiae* (Vol. 62, No.2, 2002)

¹⁴ Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.18

¹⁵ Sivaramamurti C, The Great Chola Temples (New Delhi: Archaeological Survey of India, 2007), p.41

paintings. The lotus pond, one of the ones that have survived, stands out for its superb use of colour and scene presentation. It looks fantastic to see lotus flowers, leaves covering the entire pond, animals like elephants, buffalos, and swans, as well as a man who is plucking the flowers.

Early Chola Epoch

Under Vijayalaya Chola, the Cholas ruled the area for roughly 400 years. The temple at Dadapuram, close to Tindivanam in Tamil Nadu, is noteworthy in the Early Chola Period.¹⁶

The early Cholas adopted Sembian Mahadevi's architectural design. Tiruppurambiyam is a renowned illustration of a traditional temple, that was remodelled during the reign of Sembian Mahadevi.

Later Chola Epoch

The two magnificent temples of Thanjavur and Gangaikonda Cholapuram show the maturity attained by Chola architecture. The magnificent Thanjavur Big Temple, a dedicated structure finished around the year 1009 for Lord siva, was and it demonstrates a fitting memorial to the material accomplishments of Rajarajan Era.

Thanjavur Big Temple

The Big Temple of Thanjavur was built in a large temple complete. The 216 feet tall Vimana (structure over the garbhagriha), one of the tallest shikaras in the world, is noteworthy.¹⁷ The shikara is known as the Dakshina Meru because of its enormous height. The enormous bull statue (Nandi) is carved out of a single rock and it is about 16 feet long and 13 feet tall.¹⁸

¹⁶ Balasubrahmanyam S.R, Early Chola Temples (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1971), p.41

¹⁷ Percy Brown, Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu (New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors, 2005), p.84

¹⁸ Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.67

Gangaikonda Cholapuram

Until the decline of the Cholas and the rise of the Pandyas, Gangaikonda Cholapuram served as the Chola capital for about 250 years. Without a doubt, Rajendra Chola's Temple in Gangaikonda Cholapuram is a worthy successor to the Brihadeeshwara Temple in Thanjavur. The temple rises 55 metres above the ground. As in the large temple at Thanjavur, the sanctum has two storeys. On three sides of the outer wall, there are numerous projections, with niches and recesses. Images of Siva, Vishnu, and other deities can be found in the niches. The shrines of Chandeeswarar, Ganesha, and Mahishasura Mardhini are located within this temple complex.¹⁹

Dharasuram

The temple of Dharasuram, close to Kumbakonam, belongs to the Later Chola Period. It is rich in architectural splendour and dedicated to Iravatheswara (Siva as the God of Lord Indira's elephant).²⁰ Rajaraja II built this temple. This is another iconic example of Chola architecture. Mahamandapam is a complex building. At the Mahamandapam, the entire building has four wheels, giving it the appearance of a ratha. Numerous sculptures, that are miniature versions of various mythological figures, can be found on the sanctum and pillars. The temple is surrounded by a gopuram and a compound wall.²¹

Later Pandyas

The Later Pandyas made notable contribution to South Indian art. A prime example is the 13th Century cave temple at Pillayarpatthi (close to Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu). This temple is significant for its inscription as well as its sculptures. Facing the entrance is a lovely Ganesha carving. The fact that the figure has two arms and a trunk that turns to the right, which the cave inscription refers to as Desivinayaga, is significant.

¹⁹ Nagaswamy R, Gangaikonda cholapuram (Madras: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1972), p.16

²⁰ Balasubrahmanyam S.R, Later chola temples (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1979), p.2

²¹ Krishnaswami Aiyangar S, Dravidian Architecture (Madras: The S.P.C.K Press, 1917), p.21

Vijayanagara Epoch

During the Vijayanagara Period, a new style of building appeared. The large temples are decorated with pillared outdoor mandapams, with the ones in the east, used as the waiting area for public rituals.²² These mandapams are notable for their solitary pillars. Horses, lions, and gods are sculpted on these pillars. Examples include the kalyana mandapams at the Varadaraja Perumal Temple in Kanchipuram and the Jalagandeshwar Temple in Vellore. The Pudumandapam is the most well known of these mandapams in the Madurai Temple.²³

The main characteristics of the Vijayanagar and Nayak architecture, from the 15th to 17th Centuries, include decorated mandapas, ornamental pillars, life size statues, gopuras, prakaras, music pillars, floral works, and stone windows.²⁴ The temples are provided with tanks. Massive gopurams are used to build the temple's four entrances.²⁵

Sculptures were still being inserted into the niches, during the Nayak Era. Major sculpted figures (relief sculpture) were used more frequently, as evidenced by the Gopalakrishna Temple in Srirangam's Ranganatha Temple Complex and the Alakiya Nambi Temple in Tirukkurungudi (Tirunelveli district). Other notable examples include the porch of the Nellaiyappar Temple in Tirunelveli and the southern festival mandapam of the Adinatha Temple in Azhwar Tirunagari.

In Tamil Nadu, the images of the deities were fixed to composite columns, gradually separated from the central column. The Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple's 1000-pillar

²² Venkata Ramanayya N, *Studies in the History of the Third Dynasty of Vijayanagara* (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2010), p.3

²³ Panjanadam Pillai R, *Madurai Arulmigu Minakshi Sundareswarar Tirukkovil Varalaru*, (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1975), pp.15-19

²⁴ Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture* (Bombay: D. B. Taraporevala Sons, 1956), p.91

²⁵ Crispin Branfoot, "The Tamil Gopura: From Temple Gateway to Global Icon", *ARS Orientalis* (Vol. 45, 2015)

mandapam, Pudumandapam in Madurai, Rathi Mandapam in Tirukkurungudi, and Vanamamalai Temple in Nanguneri, are notable examples of mandapam architecture.

Compared to the earlier period, these pillars are more ornamental. Massive monolithic yazhi pillars and horse pillars, with life size portraits of members of the royal and mythical families, as well as ordinary people, animals, and floral designs, were created. The important thing about this period was the presence of musical pillars. The mandapams frequently have a sitting lion, perched atop the pillars. The sanctum and mandapam walls have windows, carved out of them.²⁶

The most impressive structures from this era include the Subramanya Shrine in the Big Temple of Thanjavur, the Thadikompu, near Dindugal and Krishnapuram, near Tirunelveli, and the Jalagandeshwara Temple in Vellore. Varadharaja Perumal Temple in Kanchipuram, Kudalazhagar Temple in Madurai and the temples in Srivilliputhur, Tiruvellarai, Azhaharkoil, Tiruvannamalai, and Srirangam have Vijayanagar and Nayak paintings. Majority of these paintings depict mythological tales, palace scenes and stories from Ramayana.

Modern Period (After A.D. 1600)

As the feudatories of Madurai Nayaks, the Sethupathis ruled Ramanathapuram and made contributions to the design of the Ramanathaswamy Temple. Three sets of corridors run through the temple. The temple's outer set of corridors rises to almost seven metres in height and measures about 120 metres in both the east and west. On the other hand, the corridors to the north and south are about 195 metres long. The outer corridor is notable for its over 1200 pillars, which serve as its structural support.²⁷ Furthermore, many of these pillars feature elaborate carvings as decorations. The innermost corridor is the oldest one.²⁸

²⁶ Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.52

²⁷ Percy Brown, Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu (New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors, 2005), p.128

²⁸ Burton Stein, A History of India (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.160

Different Styles of Temple Architecture

Nagara Style Architecture

The Nagara style of sanctuary is a square, with various graduated projections, with each side giving a cruciform shape, with various edges on each side. In height, a Shikhara progressively slants inwards an arched bend, utilizing a concentric turning squares and circles guideline.²⁹

The projections in the arrangement are additionally conveyed upwards to the highest point of the Shikhara and in this manner, there is solid accentuation on vertical lines in the rise. The Nagara Style is generally found over a larger parts of India, showing unmistakable assortments and consequences in lines of advancement and elaboration, as indicated by every territory. An example of Nagara design is the Kandariya Mahadeva Sanctuary.

Dravidian Architecture (South India)

Dravidian style sanctuaries comprise constantly of the four after parts, contrasting just as indicated by the age in which they were executed. The standard part, the sanctuary itself, is known as the Vimana. It is constantly square in design and surmounted by a pyramidal on the top of at least one storey. It contains the cell where the picture of the god or idol is placed. The patios or mandapas cover the entryway to the cell. Entryway pyramids, called Gopurams, are the key highlights in the quadrangular walled in areas, that encompass the more prominent sanctuaries. Pillared lobbies legitimately Chawadis, utilised for different purposes and which are the perpetual backups of these sanctuaries. Other than these, a sanctuary contains tanks or wells for water (utilized for sacrosanct purposes) and different structures for accommodation.³⁰

²⁹ Chandra Pramod, *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture* (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), p.41

³⁰ Gabriel Jouveau-Dubreuil, *Dravidian Architecture* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1987), p.7

The improvement of the Dravidian design was due to the support of the Pallavas, the Chalukyas, the Rashtrakutas and the Cholas.³¹ The age of the incomparable Pallavas is traced from the start of the Seventh Century to the developmental time of South Indian design. Pallava architecture can be separated into two stages the stone slice design, from A.D. 610 to 690 and auxiliary shape, from A.D. 690 to 850. The primary stage mandapas or rathas (solid sanctuaries) were sculpted in the stone. A mandapa was an open structure, a corridor with cells in the back divider. The Ratha was a solid sanctuary. The best examples of the mandapa of the Pallavas are displayed at Mahabalipuram, around thirty miles from Madras.³²

The second stage of mandapa design and auxiliary structures, was developed. The most awesome case of this sort of architecture is the Kailash Sanctuary at Kanchi. The sanctuary of Vaikuntha Perumal at Canjeevaram is another case of this sort of design.³³ This sanctuary is bigger and more open than the Kailash sanctuary. The best examples of Rashtrakuta workmanship are found at Ellora and Elephanta. Like the Pallavas, the Chola rulers executed architectural marvels.³⁴ One of the most beautiful examples of Chola sanctuary architecture is found in the sanctuary of Koranganatha, at Srinivasanallur in Trichinopoly. The development of the Chola architecture is reflected in the sanctuaries worked by Rajaraja Chola and his son, Rajendra. Its extraordinary size, tremendous walled area, lobby, containing more than 150 columns, immense Lingam of strong rock, the tall pyramidal vimana or tower and the sensitive carvings in stone are the highlights of Dravidian architecture.³⁵

³¹ Chandra Pramod, *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture*, (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), p.88

³² Sivaramamurti C, *Mahabalipuram* (New Delhi: Archaeological survey of India, 1992), p.11

³³ Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, *Koil Kalai* (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.76

³⁴ Dr. Rasamanikkanar M, *Thamizhaga Kalaigalum Kalvettukkalum* (Chennai: Pavai Publications, 2011), p.142

³⁵ Percy Brown, *Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu* (New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors, 2005), p.52

Vesara Style of Architecture (Early Chalukya Architecture)

The Vesara style of sanctuary was designed by blending the Nagara and the Dravidian architecture. It has gradually advanced to its own full potential. It is also called the Early Chalukya design.³⁶

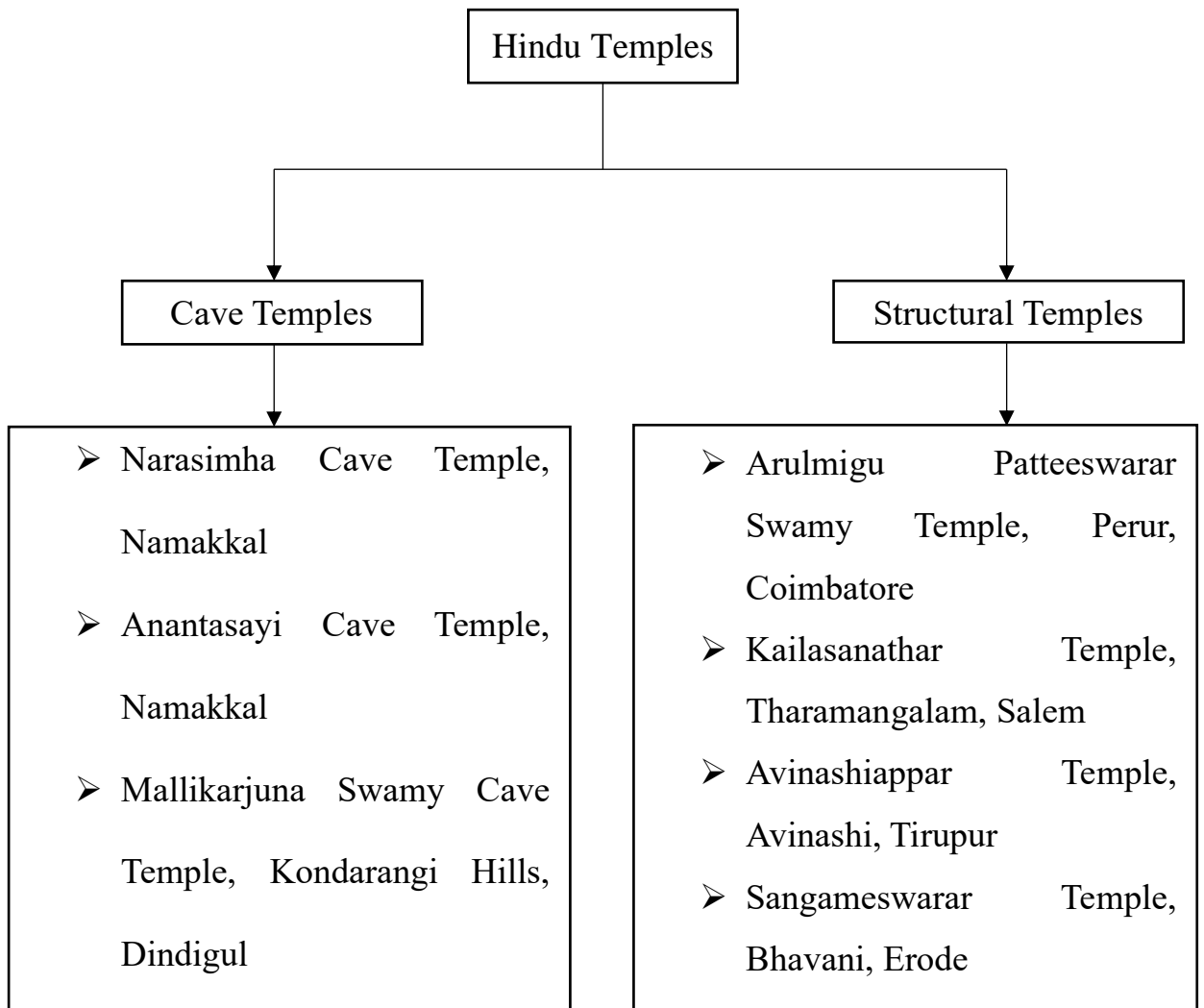
The old block sanctuaries of Uttareshvara and Kalesvara are standing monuments to the Early Chalukyan style, much more than the sanctuaries at Aihole, Pattadakal and Badami.³⁷ Badami Chalukya Design marks the pinnacle of architecture. Its Malegitti Shivalaya is a wonder, executed in stone.³⁸

³⁶ Chandra Pramod, *Studies in Indian Temple Architecture* (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), p.88

³⁷ George Michell, *Badami, Aihole, Pattadakal* (Mumbai: JAICO publishing house, 2011), p.44,79,110

³⁸ Rasamanikkanar M, *Tamilaga Kudaivarai Kovilgal* (Chennai: Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1984), p.9

Hindu Cave and Structural Temples



Hindu Cave Temples

Anantasayi and Narasimha Cave Temple, Namakkal, Tamil Nadu

Namakkal was separated from Salem District on 01.01.1997 and operates as a new district.³⁹ Erode District in the West, Karur District in the South, Trichy District in East and Salem District in North mark the borders. River Cauvery is the boundary that separates Karur and Erode from Namakkal District.⁴⁰

History of Arulmigu Narashimar Temple

Namakkal was under the rule of Hoysalas till the 14th Century, after the period of Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas. It was under the rule of Vijayanagar Kingdom till 1565.⁴¹ Salem was ruled by Ramachandra Nayakar and Katiya Mudaliar of Palaykar, who were under Thirumalai Nayakar. The famous Namakkal Fort at Namakkal was built by Ramachandar Nayakar. Then it was ruled by Bijapur and Golconda Sultans, Marathas, Hyder Ali, Tippu Sultan and during the British rule, it was under Zamindars' control.⁴²

Namagiri, the Mountain Hill is the center of the town and separates the town into two areas. It has two cave temples, carved by Atiya king, Gunasila, in A.D.784. The Narashimha cave is at the foot hill of the west side and Anantasayi cave is halfway up to the east side of the hill. Sri Narashimar, Sri Vaikunta Narayanan, Iraniyasampkara Moorthy, Sri Vamana Moorthy and Sri Varaga Moorthy are the carved statues, that stand as the best examples of sculptural works. Santum sanctorum, including the mandapam in cave temple, was built by Devathachan. Then it was renovated by Pallavas, which are evidently seen in the inscription.⁴³ In the town, Pettai is the business place. In Fort,

³⁹ Kongu Kalangiam, Part II, p.341-342

⁴⁰ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Salem District, Madras, p.696

⁴¹ W Francis, Frederic Wicholson, CS Middlemiss, CA Barber, E Thurston, GH Stuart Gazetteers of South India

⁴² Thirukovil Thala Varalaru: Arulmigu Narashimar Temple (Chennai: Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 2020), p.36

⁴³ Srinivasan K.R and Srinivasan P.R, "Atiya Inscriptions from Namakkal", Epigraphia Indica, pp.131-138

Salagrama Parvathamalai has been carved in the form of Narashimar statue. At a distance of 200 ft from Narashimar, there stands 18 feet Arulmigu Lord Anjaneyar praying to Narashimar and blesses the devotees. There is no gopuram or shed on the top.

History of Narashimar

According to Sailendar, two Dhuvara palakars (Guards) at Vaikuntam failed to do their duty and hence they were punished by Sri Mahavishnu. After many generations in the Earth as devotees of Mahavishnu, they would reach the heaven at last. They asked a boon from Sri Mahavishnu that their death should be in the hands of Sri Mahavishnu. Irinyashan and Irinyakasubu were born as giant brothers in this world. Irinyakasbu prayed to Lord Shiva and got a boon that his death should not happen, at the hands of devathas, humans, animal, fire, poison, water, weapons or by Earth or Sky.⁴⁴

He tortured humans, sages, Devas and all the three worlds should pronounce only his name. All Devas and sages went and surrendered themselves to Sri Mahavishnu and requested him to save them from him. Sri Mahavishnu made Sakarathalvar to be born as son for Iraniyan, in the name of Prahaladan. He was a small boy with all good virtues and he was an ardent devotee of Sri Mahavishnu. Prahaladan was instructed to recite the name of graniya as Iraniya Namaha but he closed his ears. Instead he prayed to Sri Hari and argued with his father to chant Sri Namu Narayana. He taught others also to do the same. But Iraniyan was enraged and tried to kill Prahaladan, by pushing him from the mountain, tied him to a hard stone and left him in the sea, made an angry elephant to attack him and put him in the company of poisonous snakes. All his plans were frustrated by Sri Hari, who save Prahaladan.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Thirukovil Thala Varalaru: Arulmigu Narashimar Temple (Chennai: Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 2020), p.36

⁴⁵ Vidya Dehejia, The Namakkal Caves (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2014), p.6

Finally, Iraniyan asked Prahaladan to show where Sri Narayanan is. Prahaladan said that Sri Narayanan, Sri Hari is everywhere and there is no place without him. He is in pillar and dust, he is within him and also in his father. Iraniyan asked where Narayana is and hit the pillar close to him. From that pillar, Sri Narayanan arose in the avathar of angry Narashimmar. Due to the boon that he received from Lord Shiva, Narshimar caught Iraniyan in his two hands in the dusk and laid him in his thighs, stood in the doorstep and with his sharp nails opened his heart and took the nerves and put them as garland in his neck. Devathas and Sages were happy and thanked Sri Narshimmar. Mahalakshmi could not see the Narashima Avatar and hence she asked Perumal that she wanted to see Narashima Avatar. Perumal said that she should chant the eight lettered mantras at Srisailam in the lake, “Kamalalayam”, which was filled with Lotus. Mahalakshmi started her meditation on Narashima Moorthy.⁴⁶

In Thiretha Uga, during the Ramayana period Lakshman fainted. To help him, Anjaneya brought sanjeevi mountain. After the war, while going back, Anjaneya took bath in River Kantaki. He was very happy to get Perumal in Salagramam there. He wanted to do his prayer at sunrise and hence he came to kamalalaya lake where Mahalakshmi was praying. He gave Salagramam to Mahalakshmi and went to do his prayer. After finishing his Ramajayam Jabam, he came to Mahalakshmi to get back the Salagramam. She said that she could not bear the weight of Salagramam and therefore, she kept it down and it grew into a mountain. She also said that Anjaneya could take the mountain as he had all the power. To obey Mahalakshmi’s words, Anjaneya tried to take the mountain in his tail. During that time, Sri Narashima showed his avatar to Mahalakshmi and Anjaneya.⁴⁷ He

⁴⁶ Thirukovil Thala Varalaru: Arulmigu Narashimar Temple (Chennai: Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 2020), p.37

⁴⁷ George M. Williams, Handbook of Hindu Mythology (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.223

blessed Anjaneya and said that the Salagramam would be kept there and would be worshipped in that place by Anjaneya. The place is called Namakkal.

Glory of Arulmigu Namagiri Thayar

NAMAGIRI, in the name of the Namakkal, is a holy and scary place. All temples in Namakkal have their significance. But Namagiri Temple is very significant. Namagiri Thayar shows her kindness by showering her blessings on all her devotees. There is Narashimar pool in this temple where devotees bathe in the morning and evening and worship Sri Narashimar. Namagiri Amman meditated in Kamalalaya pool and she was blessed with the vision of the Narshimma Avatar and obtained special powers from Narashimma. Devotees first worship Namagiri Thayar who is seated on the lotus and showers her blessings on all the devotees. Devotees worship Namagiri Thayar by doing abishekam and offering gold and sarees.⁴⁸

In March, during Uttara Star, Narshima Swami “Thirukalyanam” is celebrated here in a grand manner every year. During Navaratiri days, Namagiri Thayar Chariot is taken to all streets, with special decoration.

Arulmigu Narashimar

Sri Narshimar Temple is in the center of the town. It is a cave temple, situated in the Namagiri mountain. Lord Narashimar is in a seated position, facing the West, by keeping the right leg down and left leg folded. Sun and moon are accommodated. On his right side, Lord Shiva and left side, Lord Brahma stand by Him, to abate the anger of Narashimar. Sanka and Sanatar can also be seen near Lord Narshimma. This statue reveals the bakthi of Prahaladan towards Sri Narashima. Lord Narashima was very happy in the meditation of Mahalakshmi and hence he was also called Sri Lakshini Narashimar. Brahma,

⁴⁸ Vidya Dehejia, The Namakkal Caves (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2014), p.9

Siva and Vishnu are seen in the same Sculpture. There is no separate temple for Lord Siva in Namakkal.⁴⁹

Inside the cave temple, Sri Vaikuntanathar and Iraniya samhara Narashimmar can be seen on one side and Vamanamoorthi Ulagalantha Perumal and Varaha moorthy statues are placed on the other side. The cave temple is decorated beautifully with six pillars.⁵⁰

Significance of Srivaikunta Nathar

On the right side wall of the cave temple, Sri Vaikuntanathar, facing south, can be seen. Markandiya Maharishi is praying to Sri Narayana to save them from Iraniyan. Sri Naryana shows his Narashima Avatar to Lord Shiva by killing Iraniyan, by not nullifying the boon, Iraniyan had received from Lord Shiva.⁵¹ This can be seen as statue in the corner. Instead of Lingam, Lord Shiva displays the crescent moon in his head and snake in his hand. Lord Brahma can be seen, with four heads.⁵²

Iranya Samhar Ukara Narashimar

In the cave temple, on the right side of Sri Lakshmi Narashimar, there lies the statue of Narasimha Moorthy who came out the pillar with rage and put Iraniyan in his thighs and used his sharp nailed two hands to kill Iraniyan by opening his heart and holding weapons in his four hands, revealing the angry stance of Sri Narshima Moorthy. Blood clotting sharp nails can be seen in the right hand of Narashima. Prahaladan prayed to Sri Narshima and Sri Mahalakshmi was afraid of looking at Sri Narashimma. But Prahalada, who had obtained blessings of Sri Narayan while he was in her mother's womb, was praying without any fear. This statue reveals the bakthi of Parahalada towards Sri Narashima.⁵³

⁴⁹ Thirukovil Thala Varalaru: Arulmigu Narashimar Temple (Chennai: Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 2020), p.37

⁵⁰ Rasamanikkanar M, Thennaga kudaivarai kovilgal (Chennai: Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1990)

⁵¹ Thirukovil Thala Varalaru: Arulmigu Narashimar Temple (Chennai: Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 2020), p.39

⁵² Jagadisa Ayyar P.V, South Indian Shrines (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993)

⁵³ Vidya Dehejia, The Namakkal Caves (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2014), p.11

Carved Varagaha Avatar

The Statue of Varagaha Avathara Perumal depicts the story of termination of the evil of Iraniyan. Perumal is holding Boomadevi in his two hands and keeps four Vedas as four small faces in his head. It is an excellent statue, that shows Varagahar bending a leg in half position and a leg in kneeling position, with two statues on each side named Ella Devi and Athiseshan praying to Varagahar. Boomadevi is seated on the hands of Varagahar.⁵⁴

Ulagantha Perumal

In the cave temple, there is a statue of Ulagantha Perumal. Near the left leg of the Perumal, there is a statue of Vamana Avathar holding umbrella in one hand and getting dhanam in the guise of Brahmin Vamanan. Opposite to Vamanan statue, there is a statue of King Bali, holding kettle in his hand and giving dhanam to Vamanamoorthy.⁵⁵ Near him, there is Vindhayavalli's statue, wife of King Bali. At the top, there is the face of a horse near a pillar. Perumal's right leg pointing to the sky and left leg planted on land, can be seen. On the top of Perumal, an umbrella can be seen. On the top of the right leg, a face can be seen with knife and shield upside down. Under the right leg, there is a statue of Sukirachariyar. Karuda Alwar is seated on Sukirachariyar to punish him. Jambavan is in the sky. It is the best example of architecture.⁵⁶

History of Vamana Avathar

Sukirachariyar advised King Mahabali to do hundred Aswamatha yaga in order to become a Deventhar. Devars requested Sri Narayanan to save them. Sri Narayanan took Vamana Avathar in order to check Mahabali. Sri Narayanar requested as dhanam, from King Mahabali, a mere three feet of land. Mahabali tried to do dhanam. Guru sukirachariyar

⁵⁴ Srinivasan P.R, "Sculptures in the Two Rock-Cut Vaisnava Cave Temples of Namakkal", *Artibus Asiae* (Vol. 24, No. 2, 1961)

⁵⁵ Jagadisa Ayyar P.V, *South Indian Shrines* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1993), p.125

⁵⁶ Thirukovil Thala Varalaru: Arulmigu Narashimar Temple (Chennai: Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 2020), p.40

tried to stop it, by saying that Vamanar was Sri Narayanan. But King Mahabali did not listen, and he was keen on offering dhanam to Sri Narayanan. But Sukirachariyar wanted to stop it and took the shape of a frog and went into a kettle and shut the hole in the water kettle. But Sri Narayanan opened the hole, by inserting Tharpai grass, that hit the eye of Sukirachariyar, who was in the guise of frog, and he lost his vision. As a result, Sukirachariyar moved and Vamanar flew into the sky. After measuring two feet, Mahabali was under the feet of Narayana for third feet. Mahabali's son Namusi said that it was not right to get dhanam like that. Sri Narayanan took him up and kept him up near his upright feet. Thus, Namusi was upside down while worshipping Sri Narayanan.⁵⁷

Mahabali statue reveals that he was very happy to give dhanam to Sri Narayanan like his father Virosanan , who gave his crowned head as dhanam to Lord Indra. Jambavan praises Sri Narayanan to the sky.

Sri Ranganthar

Sri Ranganathar is seated on a lion facing Karkodan snake, at his feet Two Asuras, Madhu and Kaidopar, are at his feet, after they had become devotees of Sri Ranganathar later. In the middle portion, Bramha can be seen. Sangu, chakra, knife, arrow also can be deserved. Naradar, Thumburu, Moon and Sun can be seen, praying to Sri Ranganathar. Opposite Sankaranarayanan, a small statue of Vamanar can be seen. In this place, Karkodan worshipped Sri Ranganathar, in a state of meditation.

Sri Ranganayaki Thayar

Sri Mahalakshmi is named Sri Ranganayaki in a separate temple.

⁵⁷ Vidya Dehejia, The Namakkal Caves (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2014), p.19

Glory of Sri Anjaneya

The Salagramam from Nepal was taken by Sri Anjaneya and kept the mountain in the centre of Namakkal, with the blessings of Sri Narashima and named it “Sri Namagiri”. Sri Anjaneyar is in Viswaroopa, praying to Sri Narashima. There is no shed on top of the statue. There is no gopuram for Lord Narashimma and therefore, Sri Anjaneya also did not want gopuram for him.⁵⁸

In the Tamil month of Margali, on the new moon day, Anjaneyar Jayanthi is celebrated in a grand manner, every year. Abishekam is done to Sri Anjaneyar on auspicious days. Sri Anjaneyar is decorated with butter, flowers and Sandal powder. In Ramayana, Lanka was burnt by Anjaneya and hence to make Sri Anjaneya cool, sandal and butter are applied to the Statue.

Sri Anjaneyar was blessed by Sita with betel leaves and he was blessed with victory. Hence the betel leaf is deemed to be the symbol of victory.⁵⁹

Annadhana Scheme

Food is prepared for 100 people, every day, under the chief minister’s Annadhana Scheme.⁶⁰

Inscriptions

The corbels of the pillars and the beam cut above the corbels in the Anantasayi cave, both bear the four main inscriptions from Namakkal. Sanskrit is the language and Grantha is the script. According to one inscription, the Atiya king, Gunasila, ordered the creation of the Atiyanatha griham cave as a Vishnu shrine. Another much-damaged inscription refers to the Atiya kula and the cave as Atiyendra Vishnu griham. A third record mentions Soma of the Atiya family, the eldest son of a woman, who appears to have noble or royal ancestry.

⁵⁸ George M. Williams, Handbook of Hindu Mythology (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.223

⁵⁹ Thirukovil Thala Varalaru: Arulmigu Narashimar Temple (Chennai: Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments Department, Government of Tamilnadu, 2020), p.43

⁶⁰ Thirukovil Thala Varalaru, Op. Cit., p.45

It appears that the king, Gunasila, mentioned in the first inscription, also went by the name of Soma. The fourth record is particularly intriguing, and it is inscribed on the beam above the main sanctum, housing the Anantasayi Vishnu.⁶¹

The shrine is referred to as Sayya griham (sayanagriham), and it appears to list the gods, deities and demons, represented around the reclining Vishnu. Along with these inscriptions, the Anantasayi cave also has nine birudas of the king, Gunasila, engraved on its pillars and pilasters and one on a rock face close to the spring outside the cave. Although there are no written records inside the Narasimha cave, two birudas can be seen engraved on the rock face to the cave's right. This biruda engraving is reminiscent of a Pallava practice, especially that of Narasimhavarman II Rajasimha, who had more than 300 titles engraved on his various monuments. Gunasila describes himself as Madana Vilasa (the embodiment of the god of love), Udara Chitta (of sublime wisdom), Vimala Charita (of perfect character), Nara Deva (god among men), Naya Para (one who transcends worldly wisdom), Mana Sara (model of honor), Prakritipriya (reserved for his subjects), Naravahana (one whose means is human), Utpala Karnnika (who has ears like lilies), Manomaya (spiritual), Sribhara (holder of wealth), Silibhritan (Sitibhutan is very famous), on the twelve birudas in Namakkal.⁶²

⁶¹ Srinivasan P.R, "Sculptures in the Two Rock-Cut Vaisnava Cave Temples of Namakkal", *Artibus Asiae* (Vol. 24, No. 2, 1961)

⁶² Srinivasan P.R, "Sculptures in the Two Rock-Cut Vaisnava Cave Temples of Namakkal", *Artibus Asiae* (Vol. 24, No. 2, 1961)

Mallikarjuna Swamy Cave Temple, Kondarangi Hills, K.Keeranur, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu

History

In 13th Century A.D., a staircase was carved into the mountain by Sundara Pandya. At the top of the hill, they carved and built a cave temple. Lord Mallikarjuna Swamy is the presiding deity of this cave temple.⁶³

According to evidence from ancient history, there are four Yugas, or periods, in which life on earth lasts. The Satya yuga, the Treta yuga, the Dvapara yuga, and finally the Kali yuga. At the conclusion of each period, all life on earth will be destroyed. The energy of good vibes, which was regarded as a god in those days, is also mentioned in some Vedic texts as destroying and rebirthing itself to support human life on earth. According to the Vedas, two of the Sabtharishi saints named Kagabajendra and Ganapathy during this period took a crow rebirth and continued to live as an ambassador to a god to help regenerate the new world because of the previous destruction. On top of the hill, there is a tiny cave temple dedicated to Kagabajendran Sage.⁶⁴

Architecture

Buildings, structures, and sculptures are made using rock-cut architecture, which involves excavating solid rock from its natural location. The structure for these temple steps, was carved out of rock. To get to the hilltop for pleasant worship takes two hours. It will be challenging to climb or descend if it is raining or windy. As a result, special precautions must be taken in advance of visiting the temple. On top, there is a perennial spring.⁶⁵

⁶³ Anand, "The kondarangi hills are a range of hills over 3800 feet" Seithipunal, 04 Nov. 2017, <https://www.seithipunal.com/culture/the-kondarangi-hills-are-a-range-of-hills-over-3000-fee>. Accessed 26 Feb. 2023.

⁶⁴ Vijayakumar S, Kondarangi hills, 14 Apr. 2017, <https://kondarangihills.com/history>. Accessed 26 Feb. 2023.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Specialities

During the British era, they decided to create a blueprint to restore a place's original borders if they had been altered by an earthquake. One of the remarkable facts about this blueprint is that it has three access points for finding the altered areas Kodaikanal Hills, Tirumala Hills, and Kondarangi Hills.⁶⁶ which are known as Malliswar hills in the area. This Triangle survey is thought to be helpful in creating a report for the measurements of new land in Tamil Nadu, if it was severely affected by an earthquake.

We used to pray to God by joining our hands in a pyramid shape. Our hill Kondarangi naturally has a pyramid shape, which suggests that it will undoubtedly shower us with an endless supply of positive energy.⁶⁷

This location stands out as a premier location for bare-skinned meditation, which is typically practised by maharishis. The Pancha Pandavas carved a badge at this location to serve as a point of worship for Lord Shiva. Sidhars and Thavasis have meditated in the temple's cave. Another temple, known as Ketti Malleswarar Sri Bhramaramba Temple, is also situated in the foothills.

Hindu Structural Temples

Sri Patteeswarar Temple, Perur, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu

Perur, a historical town, is situated six km west of Coimbatore, Tamilnadu, on the Coimbatore Siruvani Road (10° 58' 30'' N latitude and 70° 54' 54'' E longitude). It lies on the south bank of the river, Noyyal, a tributary of Kaveri.⁶⁸

Appar, in his *Shedrakovai*, mentioned Perur as Pramhapuram, Peravurum, Arurar and Perurar. Shekizhar mentioned Perur in *Periyapuramam* as Kanchivaiperur. Here

⁶⁶ Vaidyanathan K.S, *The ancient geography of the kongu country* (Bangalore: Prabha printing house, 1983), p.150

⁶⁷ Vijayakumar S, *Kondarangi hills*, 14 Apr. 2017, <https://kondarangihills.com/specialities>. Accessed 26 Feb. 2023.

⁶⁸ Dr. Ramaswami A, *Madras District Gazetteer, Salem District, Madras*, p.210

Tirupukal was sung by Arunagirinathar to Dandapani. Thala Purana was recited by Sage Kachiyappa. Perur is proudly known as Pattiyuri, Adipuri, Gnanapuri, Narateswaram, Kamathenupuram, Dakshina Kailayam, Melaichidamparam. Perur Temple is about 1800 years old. There are many sculptures in this temple which present a beautiful view.⁶⁹

Temple Structure

The five tiered Raja gopuram looms majestically. The east facing gateway, adjacent to the Raja gopuram, has several pillars with elaborate carvings. On the roof there are 63 images of Nayanmars and paintings, which depict the history of the temple.⁷⁰

Pattiswarar

In the sanctum sanctorum built by the Chola king, Karikala, in the Second Century A.D., the Lord is seen in the form of a Linga, with the name of Bhattiswaran (Pattiperuman). Vesara style Vimana is on the top of the sanctum sanctorum. Kamadenu is also present at the back of the moolavar, facing east.⁷¹

Pachai Nayaki

The goddess, known as Pachai Nayaki in Tamil, is depicted standing on the Padma Peedam. The sanctum sanctorum is holding the square shaped Nagara Vimana on the top.⁷² The goddess is seen as holding a Nilotbhava flower in her right hand, with benevolent eyes.⁷³

⁶⁹ Dr. Poongundran R, Perur Temple (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1979), p.17

⁷⁰ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.3

⁷¹ Dr. Rasamanikkanar M, Thamizhaga Kalaigalum Kalvettukkalum (Chennai: Pavai Publications, 2011), p.213

⁷² Chandra Pramod, Studies in Indian Temple Architecture (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies, 1975), p.224

⁷³ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.5

Dandapani

Dandapani, facing west, graces the shrine, built in the outer shrine, during the reign of the Vijayanagara kings. Tirupugal was sung by Arunagirinathar here.⁷⁴

Gnanabhairava

Bhairava is seen as Gnanabhairava, without the dog vehicle, as it is the place of salvation.

Two Durga

Vishnu Durga and Siva Durga are found in separate shrines. Shiva Durga (Anukraha Durga) is seen to be very powerful as he is always looking at Nataraja's lifted Thiruvadi (foot), through the silver window.⁷⁵

Manonmani

Behind the Moolavar there is a Sahasralingam (1000 lingams carved in a single lingam), with Saptalingam. Manonmani, a symbol of mental strength, is also observed. Usually, Mother Manonmani used to stay hidden inside the sanctum, always looking at the lingam. But here she has been set up to bless the devotees in the outside.⁷⁶

Subramaniam

In the northwest of the shrine, Subramaniyar is depicted, looking east, standing with Deivayanai on the right and Valli on the left.

Varadaraja

Varadaraja Sannidhi is built inside the temple. He resides in a separate shrine, to the left of Pachainayaki Amman. All ten of his avatars are placed as large scale photographs.

⁷⁴ George M. Williams, Handbook of Hindu Mythology (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.223

⁷⁵ Henry Whitehead, The Village gods of south India (Chennai: Asian Educational Services, 2006), p.59

⁷⁶ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.6

Anjaneya

An Anjaneya made of a single tree (Indian rosewood) of about 4.5 feet high, is visible to the north of Pachainayaki Amman.⁷⁷

Kanaka Sabha

The Kanaka Sabha was built by Alakatri Nayak, brother of Tirumala Nayaka. In Kanaka Sabha, which took 34 years to build from 1625 to 1659, the Lord performed the Ananda Thandavam for Brahma, Tirumal, Ati Ugrakali, Sundarar and for Nandi's penance, as in Chidambaram. That is why this place is called Melaichithambaram.⁷⁸ Even today it is believed that Brahma and Thirumal are present in the name of Komuni and Pattimuni, while crossing the second panchachara step at the entrance gate of Nataraja.

Next to the first panchachara steps of Kanaka Sabha, there are eight huge idols on both sides and wonders like stone chain, spinning lotus. Beyond that, near the second Panchasarapadi, there is a statue of Yali's mouth and elephant's humming together.⁷⁹ Beyond that, the statue of a horseman is found intact on one side and broken on the other. After the sandalwood sculptures and the third Panchachara steps, there is a beautiful Nataraja, with Sivagami Ammai. It is believed that Nataraja's Hall is supported by four Vedas, as four pillars.⁸⁰ In obeisance to the Lord, the pillars are placed in a slightly inclined position.

Thandavam

Thillai, Perur - Ananda Thandavam

Madurai, Kilvellur - Right foot dance

Tiruvallangadu - Urthuv Thandavam

⁷⁷ George M. Williams, Handbook of Hindu Mythology (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.223

⁷⁸ Meena V, Temples of South India (Kanyakumari: Hari Kumari Arts, 1976)

⁷⁹ Dr. Poongundran R, Perur Temple (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1979), p.18

⁸⁰ Percy Brown, Indian Architecture: Buddhist and Hindu (New Delhi: CBS Publishers and Distributors, 2005), p.139

Thirumuruganpoondi – Brahmadandavam

Tirupattur - Gauri Thandavam

Ananda Thandavamatum

Lord has Agni in his left hand, his right hand holding Udukkai (instrument) and his abayahastam in a swinging position, and the Thiruvadi(foot) is also slightly lowered. Thiruvadi is mounted on muyalagan. Other names of Nataraja are Sabapati, Azhagiya Thiruchitrumbala Nadhar and Koothapiran.⁸¹

Goddess Sivakami is depicted, standing with a lotus flower in her right hand and dolahastam in her left hand. Tiruvadhirai is celebrated in a special way. It is one of the special Thandava places. Most of the deities and other sculptures in this temple present dancing postures.⁸²

The name of the person, who worked hard for 28 years, to bring stones from Marudamalai to this Kanakasabha, which is an example of sculpture, was Kampanachari. Kanakasabha has a total of 36 pillars, representing 36 philosophies.⁸³

After completing all the sculptures, it was decided to perform the Kumbabhishekam. King, with Kampanacharya and people, came inside the temple and visited the idols of Kampanacharya. At that happy moment, a young man in the crowd reported that one side of the horseman statue was defective. Hearing this, Kampanacharya asked him to prove the charge. Immediately the young man asked to apply sandalwood all over the statue. When Sandalwood paste was applied, only one spot of the idol was wet with sandalwood. The young man asked to break that particular part of the sculpture and living toad jumped out of the breach. Kambalacharya who had methodically studied

⁸¹ Meena V, Temples of South India (Kanyakumari: Hari Kumari Arts, 1976)

⁸² Crispin Branfoot, "The Architectural Sculpture of the South Indian Temples, 1500-1700", *Artibus Asiae* (Vol. 62, No.2, 2002)

⁸³ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.8

sculpture, cut off his hands and punished himself for this defect. To prove this story, even today the remains of a broken horseman statue can be seen to the left of the Nataraja shrine. Numerous sculptures, clustering around the pillars, exemplify Kambalacharya's sculptural skills. At present, eight beautiful sculptures have been fenced for protection. Both sides of the Kanakasabha (four per side) have beautiful sculptures, carved out of the same stone.

Nardhana Ganapathi

Nardhana Ganapathi is artistically displayed as the Dancing Ganesha. The left leg dances as if mounted on the rat vehicle. The right leg is touching the ear of the mouse, the traditional vehicle of Ganapathi. There are eight arms. The trunk is turned to the right and the hands are holding Motakam, Pasam, Ankusam and Kombu. Abdominal band is shown. The mouse is well decorated and even its toenails are beautifully displayed. Ganesha because dances it is the hall of dancing.⁸⁴

Lord Arumuga

Arumuga is seated in Sukasana pose on a green peacock vehicle. There are 12 hands. Vachiram, Abayam and Varatam are held in the hands Knife, bow, cock etc. are seen. There is Sannaveera on the chest. There are only five faces out of six faces. It is believed that there is a face behind. The legs of the peacock, the folds of the thogai(train) and the eyes on the thogai are very beautifully carved.⁸⁵

Urthuva Thandavar

In a dance competition with Alankattu Kali, Urthuva Thandavar won by raising his right leg to his ear. There is a woman, Rishaba Thandu, trident etc. Brahma has five heads

⁸⁴ Ramaratnam N, Sankara and Shanmata (Madras: M.L.J. Press Private Ltd, 1969), p.101

⁸⁵ Rajendran P and Shanthalingam S, Koil Kalai (Chennai: New Century Book House Pvt. Ltd, 2019), p.129

because of the Thandavam.⁸⁶ Apart from him, there are also Karaikalammai, Thirumal with Sangu and Chakra, Nandi and Naradhar at the back.⁸⁷

Alankattu Kali

To subdue the arrogant Kali, who had defeated the demon, Tarakan, in Alankaadu, the Lord performed Urthu Thandavam. Kali's face turned red with shame as she lost the contest. The statue is wonderfully carved in such a way that a smile can be seen when viewed closely on one side and on the angry other side. Special clothing, Mekhalai, Muthu Malai, Kachu are also visible. Hands are holding shield, parrot, trident etc. Saraswati, at the back, with musical instruments can be observed.⁸⁸

Agni Veerabhatra

Thakkan did not offer avirbhaga to Lord Shiva in the yaga, performed by him. Hence the enraged Lord Shiva took the form of Agni Veerabhatra and destroyed Thakkan's yaga. The demon has a trident on its head. Thalimalai, Masarakundalam, Sarpakundalam are also excellently carved. He holds a bow and shield in his hands.⁸⁹

Agora Veerabhatra

The idol, representing Lord Shiva, after destroying Thakkan's sacrifice, holds a sword in his right hand, a deer, a bow and a shield in the other hands. Even the hanging position of the cloth has been wonderfully carved.⁹⁰

Pitchadanar

Pitchadanar is a beautiful avatar taken by the Lord to abate the anger of the sages of Darugavana. He gives grass to the deer in his right hand. On the left side, the kuratbhuta

⁸⁶ Poongundran R, Perur Temple (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1979), p.18

⁸⁷ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.10

⁸⁸ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar, Op. Cit., p.11

⁸⁹ Ibid.,

⁹⁰ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.11

carrying alms food and the alms bowl on his head are beautiful. On the back are also shown the wives of sages of Darugavana who lost their minds.

Gajasamharamurthy wrapped in Yanayuri

Gajasura, a demon, tormented the sages and gods, with the boon he had received from Brahma. To destroy him, the Lord appeared, threw him down, stepped on the elephant's head with his left foot, and wrapped himself with his skin. Elephant's feet, tail, Ganga on Lord's head, mala and trident are visible. The intense form of this Murti is positioned in such a way that even the peeling off the skin can be seen. Beauty of Gajasamharamurthy has been honored by publishing a stamp, bearing his image, in Delhi in 1975.⁹¹

These eight idols are also large in form and beautifully carved in stone. Similar idols on either side of Nataraja are magnificently displayed in sandalwood on a smaller scale. Between the Virapatras, there are eight chains, carved in stones. In the middle of it is a lotus flower made of stone. It is rotatable. The skill of the sculptors of that time, who had showed such intricate designs in the stones, is astonishing.

Sculptures

Apart from the large eight sculptures in the Kanaka Sabha, numerous sculptures can be found throughout the temple.⁹² Among them, a sculpture of a crab and a stork, worshipping a lingam, wearing a rudraksha garland, before Dakshinamurti, a sculpture of Rama, Sugriva, Anumar standing side by side on a single pillar in the Vathiya Mandapam, and a sculpture of Kumaragurupara sitting on a lion, Kannappanayanar, and Markandeyar Poojai. Sculptures of Nataraja, Ardhanareeswarar, Dakshinamurthy, Peacock, Swan, Lingam, Rishabarudar, Narasimvathara, (face like Anumar) and Rama, with bow, are also

⁹¹ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar, Op. Cit., p.12

⁹² Crispin Branfoot, "The Architectural Sculpture of the South Indian Temples, 1500-1700", *Artibus Asiae* (Vol. 62, No.2, 2002)

carved with great skill.⁹³ According to inscriptions, the Cholan Paditura, built on the Kanchi River (Noyyal), north of the temple, was built by Karikal Chola. The history of Kongunadu can be known through the inscriptions, found here.

Arthamandapam, built by Konguchozhar, Thirukkulam with 16 angles cut by the king of Mysore, contributions of Hoysalas and many other, are known through these inscriptions.⁹⁴

Piravapuli (Tamarind tree)

The seeds of this tree do not germinate. Hence Worshipping at this temple symbolises the release from the cycle of rebirth.⁹⁵

Iravappani (Palm tree)

This tree, marked by Kachiyappamunivar, has remained immortal for many years at the Brahma Theerthakarai, in the northeast of Vadakailayar Temple.⁹⁶

Dung that does not decay

No matter how many days cattle dung has fallen in the area around the temple, it does not decay. This shows that there is no rebirth for the dead in this place.⁹⁷

Stone Bone

It is believed that bones, placed in the river Kanji (Noyyal), turn into stones in a few days. Hence last rituals are performed daily on the banks of the river, adjacent to this place.

Poojas

The temple is open, from 5.30 am to 1 pm and again from 4 pm to 9 pm. Apart from Gopuja and Gajapuja, there are four daily poojas and every friday, two Pradoshas every

⁹³ Allen George, *Sculptures of India* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1961)

⁹⁴ Sridhar T.S, *Coimputtur Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1* (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2006), pp. 303-315

⁹⁵ Subramaniasivam Melur R, *Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar* (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.13

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*,

⁹⁷ Subramaniasivam Melur R, *Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar*, Op. Cit., p.13

month, Ekadasi, Sashti, Visakha, Kiruthikai days, every month, Adiperku, Adi Amavasai, Thaipusam, Pournami, Vinayagar Chaturthi, Tamil New Year, Diwali and Pongal, poojas are held. 108 lamp poojai is being conducted every Krittikai. At present, Thiruvilakku worship is also being performed on every friday.

Festivals

A flag hoisting ceremony is held at Panguni Utram. Apart from Brahmamotsavam, Thiruvadhirai festival is also celebrated.⁹⁸ Another festival, celebrated only at this place, is the Sapling Festival.⁹⁹

Planting Ceremony

Pallupadalam is one of the 64 Thiruvilaiyadals of Lord Shiva. The Lord descends on the field and plants seedlings. The fact that this festival is not held in any other place is unique to Perur. The nine day festival starts in the Tamil month of Karthikai and ends on the 10th day, with the planting of saplings by Lord Shiva. When Sundarar came here with Paravaiyar, the Lord conducted this game. Nandi's jaw can still be seen to be splintered to prove that Nandi helped Sundara to identify Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva, hit Nandi on the jaw, with a spade in his hand.¹⁰⁰

Thalavirucham (Temple Tree)

The main tree of this temple is Panner Tree, which is located behind the main deity.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.116

⁹⁹ Subramaniasivam Melur R., Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.15

¹⁰⁰ Subramaniasivam Melur R., Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.15

¹⁰¹ Ibid.,

Theertham

The tirtha, pierced by Kamathenu's horn, is situated in front of the idol to the left.¹⁰²

Five Chariots

There are five chariots in this temple, for Swami, Vinayagar, Subramaniyar and Amman.¹⁰³

Inscriptions

The Coimbatore Mavatta Kalvettukal, published by the Tamil Nadu Archaeological Department, lists 30 of the 82 inscriptions, were found in this Temple. These inscriptions belong to, Kongu Chozhas, Veera Rajendran (1222, 1223, 1236 CE), Vikrama Chozha-II (1259 CE), Vikrama Chozha (1294 CE), Kongu Pandya Veera Pandiyan (13th Century), Veerakeralar Karikala Chozhan (13th century), Hoysala King Veera Vallalan (13th - 14th Century) and Kemba Nayak (16th Century).¹⁰⁴

According to the inscriptions, Lord Shiva was known as Thiruvanpateeswarar, Thiruvanpatti Udayar, and Thiruvanpattiyaludayar. Idangai Nayakeeswarar Koyil Perur Aludayar, Idangai Nayaka Eswaramudayar, and Thenkayilayamudayar are also mentioned.

According to the Kongu Chozhas inscription, from the 13th Century, land was given by the King as a Ponvilaidhanam, yielding 25 Kalam for 300 Kalanju of gold.¹⁰⁵

Inscription attributed to the 16th regnal year of Kongu Chozha Veera Rajendran documents that Ethirili Chozhan Angara Senapathy's endowment of burning a Sandhya Deepam. From Sundara Pandya Marayan, this temple received a gift of 1.1/4 achu.

¹⁰² Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar (Coimbatore: Vijaya Pathippagam), p.15

¹⁰³ Subramaniasivam Melur R, Pirava varam tharum perur pattiswarar, Op. Cit., p.16

¹⁰⁴ Sridhar T.S, Coimputtur Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2006), pp. 303-315

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.,

The damaged inscription of the Utsavar of Sundarar and Paravai Nachiyar, reveals that a piece of land was given for Naivedyam, in the 21st regnal year of Kongu Chozha king Vikrama Chozha – III.¹⁰⁶

The endowment of 1.5 Kalanju gold for lighting a sandhi lamp, was made by Thondaimandala merchant Sambukizhavan alias Athiyur Alwan and it happened in the 15th regnal year of Kongu Chozha Veera Rajendran.

An incomplete (partially concealed) inscription, by Kongu Chozhas, describes a person's death and a war. Additionally, it also records Sundaran Anuthira Pallavarayan's prayer for victory over a war on Rajarajapuram.

The fragmentary inscriptions mention three donations: the village of Perur was given to honour Veera Pandian's birthday, grains were given to burn perpetual lamps, and Pattykovan, a member of the Vellala community, donated land for Pushpa yaga. Gold and paddy donations were made in exchange for interest, etc.

According to Hoysala King Veera Vallalan the inscription, attributed to the (13th Century A.D.), Alavanthan of Chozha Mandalathu, Nitha Vinotha Valanattu, Neduvayil Village, founded Kathapillai Villavarayan Thirumadam in honour of his father.

A 13th Century inscription by Kongu Chozha, mentions the donation of the villages of Kil Malayur and Palakaipuzhai as well as the donation of lands from Mantrattu and taxes collected from Palakaipuzhai (Those who governed are called Manradiyars).

The construction of dams on the Noyyal River at Devichirai and Kolur as well as the sharing of water initially with the dam on Kolur's downstream side and the donation of one day's pay from Samakattar (Soldiers), Ammanagalar and Chieftains are all noted in an inscription, attributed to Kongu Chozha Veera Rajendran's 17th regnal year.

¹⁰⁶ Sridhar T.S, Coimputtur Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2006), pp. 303-315

Inscription from the second regnal year of Kongu Chozha Vikrama Chozha II states that Samakattar (Soldiers), Ammanagalar, Senapathy, those performing nayakam and all other combatants, vowed to donate their one day wages to this Temple.¹⁰⁷

Excavations at Perur

The Kongu region of Tamil Nadu (covering the present districts of Coimbatore, Erode, Salem, Namakkal, Karur, Nilgiris, parts of Dindigul and Dharmapuri) reports several archaeological sites, belonging to the megalithic and early historical periods, with well preserved artefacts.¹⁰⁸ It was famous for its mineral wealth (notably Beryl), with traders coming from as far as the Mediterranean region to buy beads, made of semi precious stones. Archaeological excavations in the region (at Karur, Kodumanal, Vellalur and Sultur) have yielded thousands of artefacts, especially Roman coins (gold, silver and copper) and gold ornaments, revealing that it was an important centre of foreign trade even during the early historical period. It is of interest to note that the Kongu region has yielded nearly eighty percent of the Roman coins, unearthed all over India. The presence of Kongu Beryl beads in the pre Mauryan stratum of Taxila excavations, reveals that the Kongu region had established trade contacts with North India as well.¹⁰⁹

Perur in Coimbatore District, which is mentioned in Sangam literature, is one of the old Kongu sites, with continuous habitation.¹¹⁰ Its location on the ancient highway along the bank of the Noyyal river was a strategic one as far as foreign trade was concerned. The Department of Archaeology undertook an excavation at Perur, to verify the authenticity of

¹⁰⁷ Sridhar T.S, Coimputtur Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2006), pp. 303-315

¹⁰⁸ Ramachandra Chettiar C.M, Kongunattu Varalaru (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University Publication, 1954), p.36

¹⁰⁹ Ashok Vardhan Shetty K, Excavations at Perur (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2003), p.4

¹¹⁰ Dr. Rasamanikkanar M, Thamizhaga Kalaigalum Kalvettukalum (Chennai: Pava Publications, 2011), p.213

the artefacts discovered by the local people, and to deepen our understanding of the history of the Kongu region.¹¹¹

In the prehistorical period, the Kongu region was a pastoral area, where cattle keepers had their settlements with cattle pens. Ash mounds are often associated with the cattle keepers, and Thiruunitrumedu reports one such ash mound. Excavations in ash mound sites like Utnoor and Piklihal in the Deccan reflect the possibility of rituals such as fire festivals being followed by the cattle keepers. Such ash mounds are also found in places like Kovilpalayam in Coimbatore District. The cattle pens are popularly called “Patti” in the Kongu region. The famous Siva temple at Perur obviously derives its name (“Pattiswarar”) from them. Even today the ash collected from the nearby habitation mound is used as sacred ash (“Thiruneeru”) in the temple.¹¹²

The Cheras ruled the Kongu region during the Sangam Age. After the Cheras, the Gangas occupied it. According to Arokiaswami, the early rulers of Ganga dynasty hailed from Perur. A Jain mendicant, Simahanandi, had acted as the catalyst for the origin of the Ganga dynasty. A copper plate, recently discovered from Karamadai, mentions Perur, Thadagam Hills and a river near Perur. From the Seventh Century A.D. onwards the region was ruled by the Pandyas, Cholas and Cheras successively. Among the early Pandyas, Parantaka Neduncadaiyan was the first ruler who brought the whole Kongu region under Pandya control. He built a Vishnu temple at Perur, which is attested by the Dalavaipuram copper plates of 9th Century A.D.¹¹³

The Chera king, Kandan Ravi, son of Kandan, is referred to in the Perur inscriptions. Viranarayanan, brother of Ravi, must have been the progenitor of Virakerala

¹¹¹ Ramachandra Chettiar C.M, Kongunattu Varalaru (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University Publication, 1954), p.36

¹¹² Ashok Vardhan Shetty K, Excavations at Perur (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2003), pp.4-5

¹¹³ Dr. Rasamanikkanar M, Thamizhaga Kalaigalum Kalvettukkalum (Chennai: Pava Publications, 2011), p.213

Dynasty which ruled Perur and South Kongu. A copper plate in the possession of Ramaswamy Iyer from Irugur, whose father was the priest of Pattiswarar Temple, mentions the battle between Uttamachola of Kongu Chola dynasty and Rajaraja of Virakerala dynasty.

Among the Kongu Cholas, in the 11 to 12th century A.D., the inscriptions of Virachola III, (1168-69 A.D.) Virarajendra, (1206-1255 A.D.) Vikrama Chola II (1265-1275 A.D.) and Vikrama Chola III (1275-1304 A.D.), are found engraved in the Pattiswarar swami Temple.

After the Kongu Cholas, the Pandyas annexed the Kongu region in the 13th Century A.D. During this period, Perur advanced significantly, both in trade and agriculture. Pandya rulers encouraged irrigation works. Two reservoirs were constructed across the Noyyal River at Perur.¹¹⁴

From the first half of the 14th Century, different parts of the Kongu region were ruled by different powers like the Pandyas (who had conquered the Cholas), the Hoysalas and the Cheras. After the Pandyas, the Hoysalas annexed the Kongu country. Many inscriptions of Viravallala III (1292 – 1342 A.D.) are available. One of these inscriptions narrates the socio-political condition, that prevailed during the Hoysala rule and it gives the genealogy of the Hoysala dynasty.¹¹⁵

Kongu country was annexed by the Mysore Kingdom during the reign of Dodda Krishnarajah (1714 - 1732 A.D). During the rule of the Mysore kings, a tank was dug by the local chieftain, Alagarri Nayakar, who was a relative of Thirumalai Nayakar of Madurai. During his rule, Kopanan Mandradiyar had built the Kanaga Sabai at Perur.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Manual of the Coimbatore District by F.A. Nicholson, 1887, pp.1-2

¹¹⁵ Arokiaswami M, The Kongu Country (Madras: University of Madras, 1956), pp.207-212

¹¹⁶ Ashok Vardhan Shetty K, Excavations at Perur (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2003), p.5

During Tipu Sultan's (1782 – 1789 A.D.) rule, the Pattiswarar swamy Temple at Perur received a donation from Tippu, as evidenced by an inscription.¹¹⁷

The excavations at Perur have thrown abundant light upon the economic, cultural and religious condition in this region. Along with the excavations at Boluvampatti and Kodumanal (ancient Kodumanam), they prove that the Noyyal basin was inhabited by a civilized group of people, who were engaged in extensive manufacturing and trading activities with other parts of India as well as with foreign countries. This civilization had continued till 1400 A.D. The artefacts collected in the excavation at Perur also attest to this fact.

In prehistoric times, Perur was presumably populated by the hunter gatherer and cattle grazing people. The region had rich pastureland and variety of flora and fauna thanks to the river Noyyal. Artefacts like black and red potshards, iron objects, a terracotta figurine, shell bangle pieces and others show that the region enjoyed a fair amount of prosperity from 1st Century A.D. to 3rd Century A.D. and was an economically developed urban settlement.¹¹⁸

Economic Conditions

The collection of a large number of beads of different varieties, collected from the excavations at Perur and also at Boluvampatti, seem to indicate that a flourishing bead making industry was prevalent around Perur. These archaeological findings could be correlated with the inscriptions engraved on the wall of the Patteswaraswami Temple at Perur.¹¹⁹ The possibility of an iron smelting industry operating at Perur, is inferred by the occurrence of iron ore and slag in the excavated trenches. The textile industry seems to

¹¹⁷ Sridhar T.S, Coimputtur Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2006), pp. 303-315

¹¹⁸ Poongundran R, Perur Temple (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1979), p.3

¹¹⁹ Ashok Vardhan Shetty K, Excavations at Perur (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2003), pp. 5-32

have been prominent even in the ancient Kongu region, as evidenced by the large number of spindle whorls of different types, found in the trenches. The occurrence of crucibles confirms the fact that gold and silver ornament making and coin making also existed at Perur.

Cultural Aspects

The people who lived in the study area, were fond of wearing different kinds of ornaments, made up of glass, semi precious stone beads and shell bangles. The presence of a number of hop scotches and dices in the excavation is an indication of the kind of recreation the people of those times indulged in. Incidentally, some smoking pipes were also collected.¹²⁰

Terracotta Art

The terracotta objects, ear lobes and beads and figuration, collected from the excavation at Perur, reveal the aesthetic sense and fine workmanship of the people in the area of study. The occurrence of terracotta seal, with the Chera royal insignia (bow), is yet another noteworthy find from this site.

Houses

The excavations revealed the existence of two types of houses at Perur. There were a number of holes found in the excavation and they might have been used for planting the post over which over them the thatched roofs were fixed. The habitation of the people, under the roof of the grooved tiles, and L shaped tiles, has been discovered, proving that the people had well sheltered houses between 3rd Century and 6th Century A.D.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Ashok Vardhan Shetty K, Excavations at Perur (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 2003), p.12

¹²¹ Dr. Poongundran R, Perur Temple (Chennai: Department of Archaeology, Government of Tamilnadu, 1979), p.3

Religious Conditions

The occurrence of a Yaksha figurine, confirms the existence of the Jainism in the study area.¹²² The figurine of a mother, holding the child, indicates the possibility of mother goddess worship and matrilineal order of society. The small soapstone Siva Linga reveals that the people in this region were ardent followers of Saivism.¹²³

Kailasanathar Temple, Tharamangalam, Salem, Tamil Nadu

Tharamangalam Town is situated in the west of Salem, at a distance of 25 km and 10 km away from Omalur.¹²⁴ It is said that Tharamangalam implies that the town was created for the Brahmins, and it was given as a donation to them. Tharai means auspicious water and it also has a story that it was where the goddess Devi Sivakama Sundari married Lord Shiva. This divine marriage scene is depicted as a carved sculpture on the entrance of the sanctum sanctorum of Kailasanathar Temple.

Gatti Mudhalis

The Gatti Mudhali Dynasty was a well known dynasty of Tharamangalam, from the 11th to 17th Centuries.¹²⁵ An inscription on a stone, dated 1268 A.D. of the Hoyasala King Vira Ramanathan, mentions that Mummudi Gatti Mudhali started construction of the great temple of Tharamangalam, Siyazhi Gatti Mudhali continued it and Vanangamudi Gatti Mudhali completed it. The inscription, discovered at the Elevepatti Village, near Tharamangalam, confirms that Gatti Mudhalis had their own signs and symbols, such as Vannathadukku (a figure of a green mat) and Vadamalai (garland of flowers).

Gatti Mudhali dynasty was ruling the kingdom, with Amarakunthi as their capital, near Tharamangalam. Their cattle used to graze in the fields near Tharakavanam. There is

¹²² Ramaswami Ayyangar M.S and Seshagiri Rao B, Studies in South Indian Jainism (Madras: HOE & Co, 1922), p.3

¹²³ Ramaratnam N, Sankara and Shanmata (Madras: M.L.J. Press Private Ltd, 1969)

¹²⁴ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Salem District, Madras, p.338

¹²⁵ Ponvizha Malar, (1946-1996) Sengunthar Kalivi Kazhagam, Taramangalam, 1996, p.56

a belief that Gatti Mudhali punished the herd man, who was working as shepherd, as one of the cows did not yield milk. Lord Shiva came into the dream of Gatti and informed that the particular cow was showering milk on a place where a Shivalinga was buried, and the Lord also told that there was a treasure somewhere north of that place. Next day, when the place where the cow was showering the milk, was excavated, a Shiva Linga was found lying buried there. They used the treasure for constructing the temple.

Rajagopuram

The temple of Lord Kailasanathar in Tharamangalam faces west and it is surrounded by a huge stone wall, that is 306 feet in length from east to west and 164 feet in length from north to south. The Rajagopuram has five storeys and it is about 105 feet tall. There are seven brass Kalasams on top of the gopuram. The temple's main doors are made of a single Vengai wood and have 60 knobs on each side.¹²⁶ Red steps, known as "Chandrakals", can be seen at the front and back of the tower (Moon stones). Normally, temples are built on flat ground or on a raised platform but here, one must descend nine steps to reach the temple.¹²⁷

The tower is attached to two wheels, that are pulled by images of horses, and in front of them, there are images of majestic elephants pulling the chariot. A shrine, dedicated to "Sri Sahasralingam", is located to the left of the Kodimaram. 1008 lingams are carved into the single stone, that makes up Shasaralingam's figure.¹²⁸ The Nandhimandapam is one of the most significant features of the temple. It includes the emblems of the Chera, Chola and Pandya Kings, a bow, a tiger, and a fish as well as the Gatti Mudhali, Vannathadukku and Vadamalai insignia.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Dinakaran, Salem Special Guide, Salem 2005, p.18

¹²⁷ Taramangalam Arulmigu Kailasanathar Thirukovil Thala Varalaru, p.13

¹²⁸ Kumbabisega Sirappu Malar, Sri Kailasanathar Temple, Taramangalam, (1974 – 1976), p.101

¹²⁹ Suganthi S, Nayakkagalin Arasiyal Elakkiyam Matrum Kalaigal (Chennai: Mayura Books, 2008), p.97

A mandapam of Sri Sidhi Vinayaka is also present and it was constructed entirely out of three stones, without the use of mortar or cement. It demonstrates the talent of the sculptor.¹³⁰ Six beautifully carved stone pillars support a portico, that leads to the inner sanctuary. Four of the pillars represent horses while the other two represent the Yazhi, a mythical creature with characteristics of both a lion and an elephant. A prince riding a horse and hunting tigers is portrayed very sensitively and realistically.¹³¹ A Yazhi pillar is so intricately carved that a stone ball with a diameter of 4 inches, placed in its mouth and it can roll freely but does not roll out. Only the blade of grass can be inserted and removed from the tiny three inch hole that has been carved into the stone platform, near the Vinayaka idol.¹³²

Entrance

After stepping down the nine steps from the entrance, there are two elephants, along with horse mounted soldiers, appearing to pull the main towers as like a temple car(chariot) and to the right there are sculptures, present the picture which of the axis of the temple car, which had broken and got stranded.¹³³

Rishipathini

The wooden doors have carvings on them that speak of the artistic proves of the sculptor. This is followed by an interior view of the Rishipathini of Tharukavanam. The Rishipathini's flowing hair, the ornaments she wears and the naturally carved nails on her fingers, all enhance the beauty of the scene. The Rishipathini's saree folds and her shy face are exquisitely captured in the picture.¹³⁴

¹³⁰ Subramanya Iyer K.V, South Indian Inscriptions (Texts Vol. VII) (Chennai: South Indian Press, 1932), p.36

¹³¹ Taramangalam Arulmigu Kailasanathar Thirukovil Thala Varalaru, p.101

¹³² Kumbabisega Sirappu Malar, Sri Kailasanathar Temple, Taramangalam (1974-1976), p.101

¹³³ Viswanathan Subramanian, "Temple Paradise Tharamangalam", *Deccan Herald* (Down south, 2013)

¹³⁴ Alagrayapillai A.P, Mangai Ena Vazhangum Taramankalam Thalapuram, 1974, p.27

Pichadanar

Notable features include the representation of the Lord with a snake as an ornament, the “Ganga” on his head, the jadamudi, wooden slippers, a deer in one hand and a begging bowl in the other. The Lord appears with a snake-like lower body and a man-like upper body. The image of the sage Panthanchali Munivar is truly amazing. Greatness of Viyakirapadhar can be seen in his enjoyment of Lord Nataraja’s dance, after gaining tiger’s legs and the strength of its eyes.¹³⁵

Oorthava Thandavam

To determine who was the better dancer, Lord Siva and Kali performed a dance at a location, known as “Thiruvalangadu”, that caused the universe to vibrate.¹³⁶ Lord Nataraja raised his leg while dancing to put an end to the dance, but Kali was too shy to do the same. Kali finally conceded defeat. Lord Shiva’s eight pairs of hands carry weapons like a soolam, udukkai, or mazhu, among others.¹³⁷

Siddhar Feeds Sugarcane to Stone Elephant

In Madurai, Lord Shiva once fed a stone elephant with sugarcane while posing as a Siddhar, and this incident is beautifully portrayed in the form of sculpture here.¹³⁸

Rage of Sakthi

Sakthi saw Lord Shiva carrying Ganga on his head and she became enraged. Sakthi and Shiva were riding on the Rishaba Vahana when Lord Shiva poured water from Ganga to satisfy the thirst of Rishaba. The upward movement of the fish and Sakthi’s angry expression are beautifully carved into the stone to create this scene. Sakthi, a statue made

¹³⁵ Dinakaran, Salem Special Guide, Salem, 2005, p.19

¹³⁶ Meena V, Temples of South India (Kanyakumari: Hari Kumari Arts, 1976)

¹³⁷ Dr. Kalai Selvi S, “A Study on The Sculptures of Sri Kailasanathar Temple at Taramankalam - Salem District”, *International Journal of Current Research and Modern Education* (ISSN: 2455-5428, 2017)

¹³⁸ Ibid.

of stone, has a realistic expression of anger on her face. If one image of Shakthi depicts her rage, another shows her serene demeanour and lovely smile on her face.

Lingodbhavar

Lord Shiva hides himself inside the Linga and Lord Brahma (who is represented by a swan) moves up to find the face of the Lord. Lord Vishnu (who is represented by a pig) moves down to find the feet of the Lord. This scene is artistically portrayed in the form of sculpture.

Manmathan and Rathi

Manmathan and Rathi's sculptures are the most noteworthy and exquisite. Manmathan sent an arrow, made of five different types of flowers, called Pushpabaanam (Arrow of Flowers) to disrupt Lord Shiva's meditation. In a fit of rage, Lord Shiva scorched Manmathan, with the fire that came from his third eye. Shiva acceded to Rathi Devi's request to revive Manmathan on the condition that she be the only person to see him. This episode has been sculpted in such a way that Rathi is rendered invisible when viewed from the statue of Manmathan. However, Manmathan can be seen when viewed from the statue of Rathi, who is perched on a swan. Manmathan presents a lovely image, with his flower-tipped arrow and parrot mount. Rathi is depicted with her swan mount, gorgeous hair, and pearl tassel.

Vaali and Sugreevar

The battle between Vaali and Sugreeva is depicted on a stone slab in the southern section of the mandapam, which is in front of the temple of Lord Kailasanthar. Rama's unsuccessful attempt to sneakily shoot an arrow at Vaali is depicted on the third slab of the mandapam's southern section. Rama's statue can be seen, in the context of the fight between Vaali and Sugreeva, but Rama cannot be seen from Vaali and Sugreeva's statue.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Taramangalam Arulmigu Kailasanathar Thirukovil Thala Varalaru, p.39

Eight stone chains and sculptures of the Devas who watch over the eight directions - Indira, Agni, Yama, Niruthi, Varuna, Vayu, Kuberan and Isaanyan, can be found on the mandapam's roof. Eight stone parrots are perched on a lotus in stone. An ever rotating stone ring is located in the centre of the lotus flower. On one petal, the parrot's body is visible, and on another, its beak and on the third, its tail.

Three stone balls can be seen in the mouth of the lion, which is depicted on one of the roof's stone slabs. Two additional lion images are depicted, with one stone ball in each of their mouths. The scene, where Vishnu gives his sister Parvathi to Lord Shiva in marriage, can be seen in the centre of the mandapam's roof, complete with a beautiful stage setting during the ceremony.¹⁴⁰ This location is known as "Thramangalam" because Parvathi Devi is married to Lord Shiva there.

On three days a year, the Sun God pays a special visit to this temple. The sun rays fall on Lord Kailasnathar's forehead, in the shape of a crescent, on the 20th, 21st, and 22nd of the month of February (or the 9th, 10th and 11th of Tamil Month of Masi), at around six in the evening. Devotees could witness this magnificent sight every year. Regarding sculptural beauty, the Lord Kailasanthar Temple in Tharamangalam is exceptional. Tharamangalam welcomes visitors from all over the world, to take in its artistic and sculptural splendour.¹⁴¹

Sahasralingam Shrine

Once the entrance steps are crossed, there lies the shrine Sahasralinga. There are thousand and eight lingams, carved on the body of the Shivalinga deity, housed in the sanctum. There is a path to go around the shrine, in clockwise direction and there are the

¹⁴⁰ Busangi Rajannan, Salem Encyclopedia, 1992, p.167

¹⁴¹ Dr. Kalai Selvi S, "A Study on The Sculptures of Sri Kailasanathar Temple at Taramankalam – Salem District", *International Journal of Current Research and Modern Education* (ISSN: 2455-5428, 2017)

icons of the three Tamil dynasties and that of the Gatti Mudhali with evergreen garland sculpted.

The Lord Muruga here presents himself as Sengkottuvelar, facing the south and the pillars carry the sculptures depicting the event in which Kannappar donated his eyes to Lord Shiva. This sanctum is so big that it has plenty of minute sculptures. This is a place in this temple, eminently fit for mediating.¹⁴²

Avinashiappar Shrine

This sanctum is placed immediately after crossing the stairs. In this sanctum, the event of Sundaramurthi Nayanar, appealing to the Lord and getting back the son alive from the crocodile, which swallowed him earlier has been carved into sculptures. This temple is one among the seven shrines in the Kongu region.

Avinashiappar Temple, Avinashi, Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

One of the Paadal Petra Shiva Temples is the Avinashi Lingeswarar Temple. It was built before the Seventh Century and later expanded by the Chozhas, Kongu Chozhas, Pandyas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagaras and Nayaks. Avinashi town is situated about 11°10'N latitude and 77°16'E longitude in Tirupur District.¹⁴³

The Avinashi Temple is thought to be the first one of seven Shivastalams in Kongunadu.¹⁴⁴ The Shri Perumanayaki Perunkarunai Nayaki (Karunambika) temple is another name for it. According to a legend, Sundaramurthi Nayanar is related to the building of the temple. The “Moovendargal” Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas, have all contributed to this temple. The current temple is thought to have existed since the 10th Century A.D., making it one of the oldest in the Coimbatore region.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Dr. Kalai Selvi S, “A Study on The Sculptures of Sri Kailasanathar Temple at Taramankalam – Salem District”, *International Journal of Current Research and Modern Education* (ISSN: 2455-5428, 2017)

¹⁴³ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Coimbatore District (Madras, 1966), p.185

¹⁴⁴ Ramachandra Chettiar C.M, Kongunattu Varalaru (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University Publication, 1954), p.36

¹⁴⁵ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Coimbatore District (Madras, 1966), p.1

In his hymns, Thirumoolar has referred to this location. This Thiruvasagam Temple is mentioned by Manikkavasagar. Thirupugazh was sung by Arunagirinathar, over this temple's Murugan. Tamil has the proverb, "Kasiyil Vasi Avinashi" (Half the benefits of worshipping in Kashi are obtained by praying to Avinashiappar). This temple has several associations with Kashi.¹⁴⁶

As per the Sthala Puranam, this Temple is closely associated with Mysore royal family. They have done extensive development works in this temple. In Mysore, when anyone is appointed as the King, that person would first visit Kashi, bring a lingam from there, keep it in this temple and offer prayers and then only return to Mysore and coronation would take place.

The Lord here is Swayambu Murthy. As per the legend, Sundarar was passing through this place, on his way to Thiruvanchikulam, to meet Cheraman Perumal Nayanar. He saw contrasting houses in the street adjoining the temple. While in one house, there was lot of joy in celebrating the thread ceremony of a child, the next house was gloomy. When Sundarar enquired about it, he was told that in that house, a young boy was swallowed by a crocodile in the temple tank a few years back.¹⁴⁷

Moved by their plight, Sundarar sang to the Lord and miraculously the dry tank got filled up with water and the crocodile came up and spat full grown boy. This tank is called Tamaraikulam and there is a small shrine for Sundarar there. This legend is celebrated on Panguni Uthiram Day (March, April) as Mudalaivai Pillai Utsavam. There are several other Theerthams in this temple, the most important being the Kasi Kinaru, where the water is believed to be from Ganges River.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.187

¹⁴⁷ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem, Op. Cit., p.185

¹⁴⁸ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem, Op. Cit., p.187

Vinasa means destruction. Since the Lord in this temple prevents destruction or one who is indestructable, He is called Avinashiappar. There is a belief that the roots of the Kashi Vishwanatha Lingam are here and Shri Avinasiappar peetam is on top of the root. Hence this place is also called Dakshina Varanasi. As Brahma had worshipped here, the Lord is also called Brahmasureeswarar. Since the mother here is Karunambika, the Temple is also known as Karunaiyathal Temple. As per the legend, Ambal observed penance here and the Lord gave her the right to remain on his right. In this temple, she is present in two places one in the main shrine on the right side of the Lord and another in a separate shrine, doing meditation. There are separate gopurams and flag posts for both the Lord and the Mother.¹⁴⁹

There is a separate shrine for Kalabhairavar and unlike other temples, Vada Malai is offered to him, especially on Ashtami days. In this temple, Bhairavar comes after Shiva and Parvati in the order of Poojas. This Bhairavar is considered an elder brother of Kalabhairava of Kashi and he is called Shri Akasha Kashikapura Pruradhanadha Bhairavar.

The shrine for Murugan is between the shrines for the Lord and Mother. The design of this shrine is very distinct as it is in six triangular shapes. There are 32 Ganapathis in this temple. There is also a shrine for Shiva Surya.

Taking bath in the Kasi Kinaru and worshipping the Lord on the New Moon Day (Amavasya), is deemed to be very auspicious and hence on that day, the temple remains open throughout the day. Vishnu is present near the flag post facing Shiva. Anjaneyar Shrine is at the entrance of this Shiva temple. There is a sculpture of a monkey, hanging upside down, carved in a pillar. There are also some intricate carvings in the Navaranga Mandapam. The scorpion carving in the Ambal Shrine is also very realistic and those born

¹⁴⁹ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem, Op. Cit., p.186

in the Zodiac sign of Scorpio pray to the mother, after praying to the Selva Ganapathi near the entrance of the temple.¹⁵⁰

It is believed that offering prayers in this temple reduces the ill effects of Sani. Sage Vashista had worshipped in this temple to get relief from Sani dosham. He established shrine for the Sani Bhagavan in this temple and he is called Anugraha Murthy. The idol is very distinct, with his right leg on peetam, left on his vehicle, the Crow, one hand holds a bow, another, an arrow, the third one, the trident and the last one, in Abhaya Hastha posture (blessing the devotee).

Some of the important things, connected with this Temple, include the seven tier Rajagopuram, which is around 100 feet in height. The temple car (Ther) with intricate carvings is one of the largest in Tamilnadu and it is believed to be as big as the celebrated Thiruvarur Ther. The Deepa Sthamba of this temple is huge and tall, with a height of around 70 ft, with the crocodile story carved on the base. The Nandi in this temple is also very large. The Pathiri tree, which is the Sthala Vruksham (Trumpet flower tree), blossoms only during the annual Brahmotsavam.¹⁵¹

Inscriptions

According to the inscriptions, Ambal is referred to as Kamakottathu Perungkarunai Nayagi and Lord Shiva is known as Avinashialudaiyar and Avinashi Aludaiya Nayanar.¹⁵²

The inscriptions cover the following periods of Kulothunga Chozha-I (1152 CE), Veera Rajendran (1222 CE), Vikrama Chozha-III (1267 CE), Kongu Pandyan Sundara Pandyan (14th Century), Hoysalas (14th Century), Vijayanagar Achutharayar (1538 CE), Veera Vallalan-III and Maharayar (16th Century) in Kanada, Nandhi Nagari.

¹⁵⁰ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem, Op. Cit., p.186

¹⁵¹ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.186

¹⁵² Sridhar T.S, Coimputtur Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2006), p.303-315

The inscriptions mention the King, donating 30 cows for the artha jama pooja and lighting the perpetual lamp, as well as the donation of the village of Vadaparisara Nattu Alathur to this temple. The Parpanars were allowed to use a Kerala style umbrella, a China (Silk) umbrella, a horse procession for marriage and other methods after paying the treasury. According to one inscription, Veerarajendran's wife and Queen Chilambazhvi had donated land and asked Shiva Brahmis to look after the Temple's treasury. In the event of a shortfall, they would sell their right to perform pooja to make up the difference. Donation of funds to fuel a permanent lamp, donation of Manikkavasagar copper statue, installation of Sandesa Nayanar, following renovation of Veerapandian Thiruvolakka Mandapam and Thirukanaper (Kalayar Koil), have also been recorded in these inscriptions.¹⁵³

Sangameswarar Temple, Bhavani, Erode, Tamil Nadu

Bhavani town is situated about 11°44'N latitude and 77°68'E longitude in Erode District.¹⁵⁴

The mystical Agaya Gangai (Amutha) which is not visible and the Kaveri and Bhavani rivers all meet at the place where Sangameswarar Temple is located. It is similar to Prayag (Allahabad), where the Ganga, Yamuna, and the invisible Saraswathi join together. As a result, this location is known in Tamil as Kooduthurai or Dakshina Triveni Sangamam. Similar to Prayag, rituals are carried out here by devotees for the departed as well as for Pariharam. The three Tamil kings, Chera, Chozha and Pandya, all contributed to its development. Major contributors also include the Mysore Kings.¹⁵⁵

Shri Vedanayaki (Pannaar Mozhiyal), also known as Shri Sangameswarar, is the presiding deity. Ten thevarams have been sung by Thirugnana Sambandar about this Lord.

¹⁵³ Sridhar T.S, Coimputtur Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2006), p.303-315

¹⁵⁴ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Coimbatore District (Madras, 1966), p.1

¹⁵⁵ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.8

According to the puranas, the milky ocean's nectar (Amirtham) emerged when it was stirred. Rishi Parasara managed to save a tiny amount of the nectar. This Swayambumurthy was created when this nectar was later transformed into a Sivalingam. He is referred to as Amirthalingeswarar because of how he emerged from Amirtham. Ambal is known as Vedanayaki due to the worship of four Vedas. Amman has a separate shrine.

Between the shrines of His Parents is where Shri Subramanya's shrine is located.¹⁵⁶ This temple's Murugan (Karthikeya) is well known, and Arunagirinathar has sung Thirupugazh. Sahasralingeswarar is housed in a shrine as well. Even though there is only one lingam, it is made up of 1008 smaller lingams and worshipping this Lord helps to counteract the negative effects of Rahu Ketu.¹⁵⁷

The Kallala tree, behind the Lord, at the Dakshinamurthy shrine is particularly unusual because it is so short that it resembles a tuft on the Murthy's head. The presence of 63 bronze Nayanmars, who are arranged to look like they are in a Navarathri Kolu is another distinctive feature. The Nayanmars are arranged in a line in other temples. The 64th Nayanmar is now installed as Shri Kripananda Variar's image. The three headed, three armed and three legged Jurahareswarar, housed in a separate shrine, is another distinctive aspect of this temple. Patients, who pray to him, are healed of their illnesses.

This temple is well known for its Vishnu shrines, that are located within the same complex, though it is a Shiva sthalam. The shrines of Adikesava Perumal and Soundaravalli Thayar are located on the western side. Salagramas make up the Perumal Murthy. In the main shrine, the Lord is seated alongside Sridevi and Bhudevi. The sannadhi of Shri Yoga Narasimhar can be found between the shrines of Swamy and Thayar. On the days of

¹⁵⁶ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.9

¹⁵⁷ Dr. Mookareddy C, Bhavani Arulmigu Sangameswarar Thirukovil Varalaru (Sivakasi: Devi fine arts, 2017), p.11

Pradosham, special poojas are offered to Narasimhar. Thulabharam is regarded as the luckiest of the offerings.¹⁵⁸

The shrines of Vedanyaki Ambal and Soundaravalli Thayar, which were previously installed in another temple in Kalingarayanpudur, south of the Kaveri River, are placed between the shrines of Shiva and Vishnu. A local chief by the name of Puliur Gounder brought Murthy to this temple because it was in disrepair and built the Thayar and Narasimhar shrines.

The Sannadhi of Shri Venugopalan, along with his consorts, Rukmani and Sathyabhama, is located on the northern side. This Lord has a two headed cow, standing by his side. Near the Rajagopuram is a shrine dedicated to Anjaneya. All the festivals associated, with both philosophies, are observed here because there are temples dedicated to both Shiva and Vishnu within the same complex. This temple has four entrances, including a five tier Rajagopuram on the northern side and another gopuram on the southern side, both of which are shared by Shiva and Vishnu temples.¹⁵⁹

Sage Viswamithrar is also connected with this temple. The Holy Gayathri Mantra was given to us by this Sage. There is a belief that he built a lingam by reciting the Gayathri Mantram. As a result, the Lord is also known as Gayathri Lingeswarar. The location of this Lingam is close to the riverbank.

According to the Sthala puranam, Kubera, an ardent devotee of Shiva, once travelled around various Shiva temples in his Pushpaka Vimana. To his surprise, when he got close to this location, he discovered that both domestic and wild animals coexisted peacefully and that Gandharvas, Rishis and Devas were performing penance, without interfering with any other living thing. At the same location, along the riverbank, close to

¹⁵⁸ Dr. Mookareddy C, Bhavani Arulmigu Sangameswarar Thirukovil Varalaru, Op. Cit., p.21

¹⁵⁹ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.9

an Ilandhai tree (Indian Plum), all of these events were taking place. When he asked the Lord to clarify the significance, he was told that the Vedas had visited this location, and Kubera was instructed to worship both Vishnu and the Lingam that is located beneath the Ilandhai tree. As requested by Kubera, Shiva and Vishnu both offered joint darshan in this Kshetra, and this Ilandhai bears fruit throughout the year.¹⁶⁰

There are many connections between this temple and Chidambaram. The two temples are said to be connected by an underground passage. Both temples follow the same pooja times. Similar to Chidambaram, this temple also has a Vishnu shrine.

It is worthwhile recounting a miracle that took place more than 200 years ago. In 1804, A William Garrow, a British official, was camped close to this temple. One night while he was sleeping, a young girl woke him up and urged him to leave the house. When he exited, the structure collapsed. The foreigner concluded that the girl had saved him. He searched everywhere for her but failed to find her. The locals claimed that Mother Vedanayaki saved him when the incident was reported to them. To verify this observation, Garrow had three holes drilled in the wall in front of the mother's shrine. Garrow was surprised to find that Mother's image resembled the person who had saved him. He gave a gold plate and a wooden cradle to the temple as a token of his appreciation. In this temple, the holes, cradle and gold plate are still visible.¹⁶¹

The stone carvings at this temple are renowned as well. For instance, in front of the Ambal Shrine, there are two identical statues. One of them smiles when milk is poured on them, but the other sobs. The stone ring chain above the Dakshinamurthy shrine is another sculpture that attracts attention. There are many beautiful sculptures on the walls and ceiling of the Nrthya Mandapam.

¹⁶⁰ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem, Op. Cit., p.10

¹⁶¹ Dr. Mookareddy C, Bhavani Arulmigu Sangameswarar Thirukovil Varalaru (Sivakasi: Devi fine arts, 2017), p.8

Inscription

The inscriptions are recorded in Erode District Inscriptions Volume-I.

The 17th Century inscription (1640 A.D.), attributed to Nalludaiappan Immudi Getti Mudali, is inscribed in two stones, in which 1-10 lines are in one stone and 11- 15 lines are in another stone. This inscription records Prakara (circumambulatory path) in Lord Shiva's Shrine, Nirutha mandapa, Vimana, Ambal Vedhanayaki's shrine and its Sanctum Sanctorum, ardha mandapam, Maha mandapam, Kumarar Temple (Subramaniyar), Vasantha Mandapam, Gopuram, walls, Yaga Sala and Shasrara Linga (1008 Linga on one Linga).¹⁶²

The 18th Century (1741 A.D.) inscription, traced to Mysore Raja, Krishna Raja Udaiyar, records that during the period of Mysore Udaiyar's Chieftain, Thalavai Devarasaiyan and the period of Nanjaraya Udaiyar, an official, Ambal Panmozhiammai Temple's Prakara Thirunadai Malaigai was constructed by Ananda Naranan's son, Bhavani Koodal Seshaiyan. This inscription further records that this was done by the sthpathi seshachari, who was Veeraraghava Achari's brother.

Another 18th Century inscription, attributed to Immudi Getti Mudali, records that the Ambal Pannar Mozhi Amman's sannidhi ardha mandapam was built by Immudi Getti Mudali's wife and the sthpathi was Narayana Achari, who was the son of Kuruva Achari and brother of Rangappa Achari. Another inscription, in the mandapa mentions Chinnammal Sathasevai.¹⁶³

A 17th Century inscription of Krishna Devaraya period, mentions the Governor's name as Vaalarasa Udaiyar. Seeman Thiruvala Nandan, son of Chennarasan, constructed

¹⁶² Dr. Rasu S, Erode Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), pp.198-214

¹⁶³ Dr. Mookareddy C, Bhavani Arulmigu Sangameswarar Thirukovil Varalaru (Sivakasi: Devi fine arts, 2017), p.10

the compound wall of the temple. The first part of the inscription is in the form of a poem in Venba style.

Another inscription (1689 A.D.), on the Subramaniyar Sannidhi adhistanam, records the construction of Vahana Peacock Mandapa and the peacock, by one Kanthappan, who was the grandson of Kanthappa Pillai and son of Aththiyanna Pillai, from the Athreya Gothram.

East India Company's inscription, dated 11th of January, 1804 A.D. records that a ivory tusk cot was donated by W Garrow.

Since foreigners were not allowed to enter the temple, William Garrow, who was the Collector of Coimbatore, had the darshan of Ambal from outside, through holes made on the wall opposite to Ambal's shrine.¹⁶⁴

Another 17th Century inscription, opposite to Perumal Temple Thayar Sannidhi, records the construction of Vimanam over the Sanctum Sanctorum of Soundaravalli Thayar Sannidhi and ardha mandapam. This was done by Narayana Gounder. One, of the records mentions that this Narayana Gounder was the brother in law of Getti Mudali.

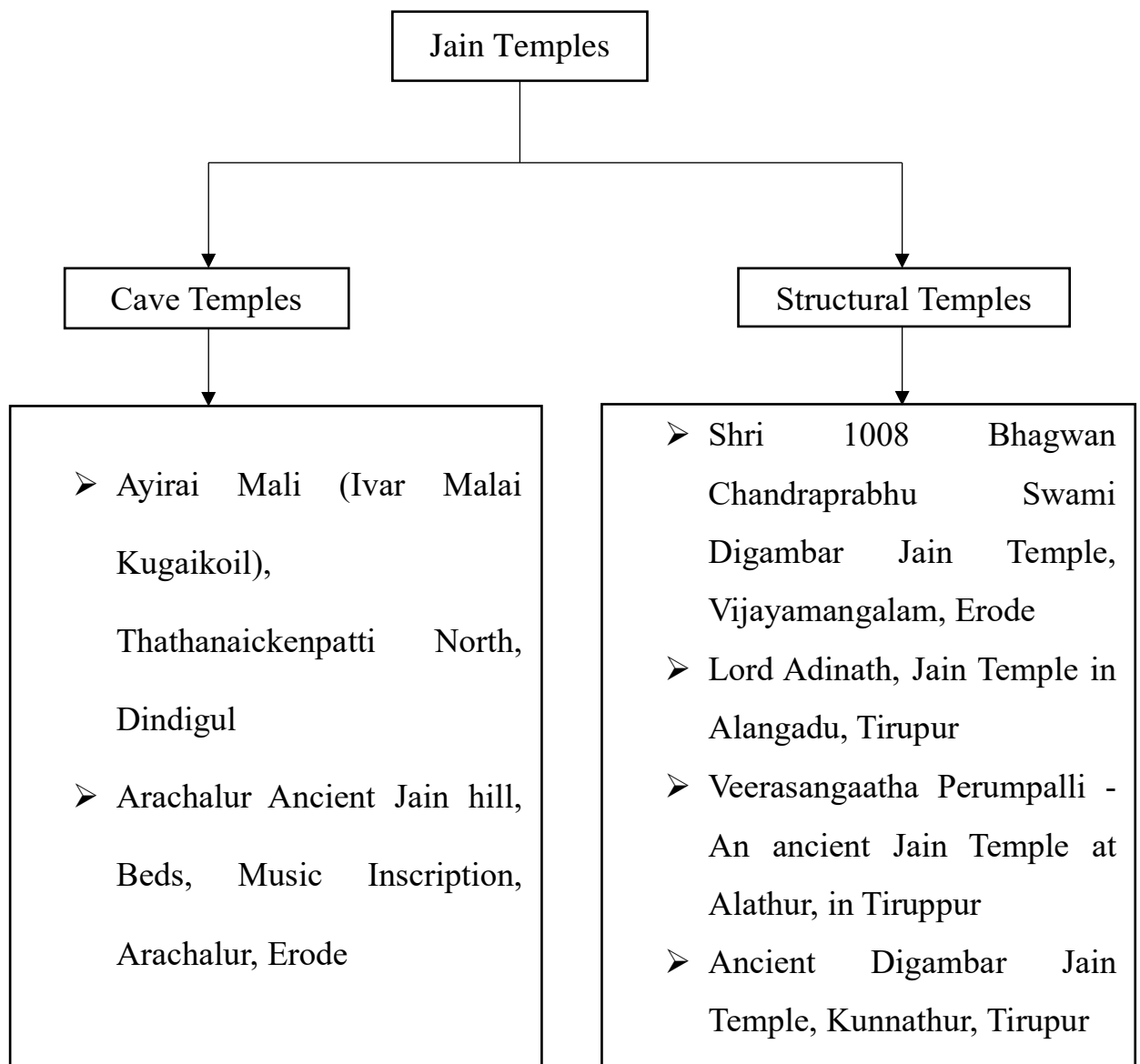
Fragment of stone inscriptions, found in the Gopuram, Amman Temple, Kumarar Temple, Gayathri Mandapam, Padithurai and Perumal Temple, refer to persons who had done thirupani to this temple. Anthiyur Kanakkar, Chellappar, Kembanan, Poongothai, Nallathambi Deivanayagam, Thirupani Maniyam Abath Sahayan, Kunjan Servai's son, Kumma Nattuvan, Villavan, Sathyabama Ammal, Periya Pattanam Ramaiyar, Narayanaiyar, have been mentioned. Poongothai was the wife of Paththarpadi Emberuman Kavirayar, who composed Thakkai Ramayanam. Getti Mudali also composed literature

¹⁶⁴ Dr. Mookareddy C, Bhavani Arulmigu Sangameswarar Thirukovil Varalaru (Sivakasi: Devi fine arts, 2017), p.11

along with Chinnammaiar. Those inscriptions also mention naivedyam, donation of a village, called Thiruvidayattam, poojas, construction of steps etc.,¹⁶⁵

The 1904 inscription, near Padithurai, records the steps taken by T.S.A Rangasamy chetti, Panchayat president, to prevent the pollution of the river through washing the clothes animals, etc.,

Jain Cave and Structural Temples



¹⁶⁵ Dr. Rasu S, Erode Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), pp.198-214

Jain Cave Temples

Ayirai Malai (Ivar Malai Kugaikoil), Thathanaickenpatti North, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu

Ivar Malai is located near Palani in Dindigul District.¹⁶⁶ The inscription of Varaguna Pandya II of 9th Century A.D., refers to Jain sculptures and natural mountain pool.¹⁶⁷ Aivarmalai is about 1400 feet above sea level. Pilliyar Temple is on top of the southern side and there are Ramanujar Mutt and Dandapani Temple on the northern side of the hill. In the south, about 160 feet width and 13 feet high, there is a Throupathi Amman Temple. There are 16 Jain Tirthankar images, carved on the rock. Tamil inscriptions are also found here. At present, there are forests around Aivarmalai. Important villages around the hill are Papamatti, Kolumam, Ayyampalayam and Lakshalapatti.¹⁶⁸

Ayira Malai

Eighth Century A.D. inscription was found on the hill called Ayiraimalai.¹⁶⁹ Yakshi is worshiped here, and this mountain received the name Ayiraimalai. This mountain was controlled by the Cheras. It is a very prosperous area. There is an inscription of Varuguna Pandyan II, belonging to 9th Century A.D. The emblem of Pandyas was fish and they may have referred to the mountain as Ayirai, meaning fish, which was their symbol. Inscriptions refer to Mount Airai as Sri Airai. Now this mountain is colloquially referred to as Ivarmalai.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁶ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Coimbatore District (Madras, 1966), p.87

¹⁶⁷ Desai P.B, Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs (Sholapur: Gulabchand Hirachand Doshi, 1957), p.31

¹⁶⁸ Manomani T, Kolumam Kumaralingam Aivarmalai (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), p.13

¹⁶⁹ Dr. Sircar O.C, Epigraphia Indica Vol-32 (Calcutta: Government of India press, 1962)

¹⁷⁰ Desai P.B, Jainism in South India and Some Jaina Epigraphs (Sholapur: Gulabchand Hirachand Doshi, 1957), p.32

Sculptures

Sixteen images of Tirthankaras are carved on the rock above the Thiroupathi Amman Temple, divided into six parts, for a length of about 30 feet. Except for Parshuvanatha, others are carved in a seated position. The Iyakkan figures are depicted. An image of Tirthankara is inscribed above the pre-cut inscription. It may also belong to the 10th Century. Each sculpture is about 18 inches tall.¹⁷¹

Jain Sculptures of 8th and 9th Centuries

In the 8th and 9th Centuries, Jainism spread from Pandya Nadu to Kongu Nadu via Palani. At that time, in Tamil Nadu, they gave up the habit of cutting beds and made relief sculptures. The 9th Century Tirthankar images are located at Thirumurthy Hill. There is an image of Jain Tirthankar in the Aditheswarar Temple in Periya Karanthi and an image of Tirthankar in Devanam Palayam of Pollachi Circle. 10th century Jain sculptures are found in Palladam Circle in Pongalur. Similarly, in Ayrai, relief sculptures are found without beds. Yakshi figures are also found, under the name of Iyakka and Avvai. Among the 24 Tirthankaras, there is also a sculpture of the 23rd Tirthankara, "Parshuvanatha". Students have made these sculptures. The deity here is identified as Sri Ayiraimalai Devar. People have worshipped these images of Tirthankar under different names, over the time. Now it is preserved by the Archeology Department.¹⁷²

There is an opinion that Jainism was spread in Tamil Nadu through Kongu Nadu by Sage Vishaka, who was the student of Pathirabaku from Shiravanapelkola, Mysore, during the time of King Chandragupta, who established the Maurya Empire. Hence they

¹⁷¹ Manomani T, Kolumam Kumaralingam Aivarmalai (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), p.16

¹⁷² Manomani T, Kolumam Kumaralingam Aivarmalai, Op. Cit., p.17

made Vijayamangalam their headquarters in Kongu Nadu. Kongu Cholas might have supported Jainism during the 11th to 14th Century A.D.¹⁷³

Yakshi Worship

Goddess worship has existed in South India since ancient times and the Jains also promoted female goddess worship, to compete with other religions, with the aim of spreading their religion.

To the right of the tirthankaras there is a Yaksha figure. Yaksha figures are found in places like Anandhamangalam, Cholawandipuram, Panchapandavarmalai, and Anaimalai. They are also mentioned in inscriptions on the mountains of Aivarmalai, Kalgukumalai, Thirucharanthamalai and Panchapandavarmalai.¹⁷⁴

Female teachers were referred to as Kurathias. It is also known that many monasteries and schools were headed by women. Jain women have also been given an important place in Aivarmalai. The name, Kurathiyar, is found in inscriptions.

In course of time, the people started worshipping Yakshi as Throupathi. Even today, the “Throupathi Worship” is very popular in Ivarmalai. Inscriptions prove that Yakshi worship was prominent on the Ivar Hills. A Yakshi image is carved on the Panchapandavar Hill near Vilapakkam. This is the oldest Yakshi figure in Tamil Nadu.

Location of Cave Temples

Ancient Buddhist and Jain schools are located near highways. Buddhist temples at Karle, Kondane and Betsa Nashik, are located near highways. Aivarmalai is also close to the Palani-Kolumam Highway, which confirms the above point.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Ramaswami Ayyangar M.S and Seshagiri Rao B, Studies in South Indian Jainism (Madras: HOE & Co, 1922), p.109

¹⁷⁴ Manomani T, Kolumam Kumaralingam Aivarmalai (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), p.18

¹⁷⁵ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State (Coimbatore and Salem), 1968, p.66

Inscriptions

The inscriptions were written in Vatteluthu and Tamil.¹⁷⁶ Among the inscriptions, the Varakuna Pandya II inscription helps to calculate the reign of the early Pandya Dynasty.¹⁷⁷ This Varaguna was the son of Srimara Srivallabha (811-860 A.D.). Chinnamanurcheppedu praises him as Mani Nedundhol Mannarkon Varagunavarman. He was very devoted to Tiruchendur Murugan. He had generously given 1400 gold coins, for the annual worship of the Lord. In the history of Tamil Nadu, two of the Pandya kings were known with the title of Varakunan. Among them, this second Varaguna was a contemporary of Manikkavasaka. According to the inscription, during his time, Parsuvapadar at Thiruvairai and Iyakkan had renovated them and spent five hundred gold.¹⁷⁸

Sri Achanandi

Apart from Varakuna, inscriptions, referring to Jain monks, are also found. The name Achanandi is found. It can be said that Achanandi was the person, instrumental for the growth of Jainism in Tamil Nadu. In Prakrit language, Achanandi means Ariya Nandi. Achanandi was responsible for the appearance of Jain sculptures in places like Vadarkadu, Vallimalai, Anaimalai Ivarmalai, Alagarmalai, Karungalakkudi, Uttampalayam etc. It is also worth noting that the name, Achanandi, appears in the inscription at Anaimalai. Acha Nandi is also mentioned in Alagarmalai. Sri Achanandi is mentioned in inscriptions, under a sculpture at Konkar, Puliyakulam.

A sculptural inscription at Karungalakkudi, states that it was done by Achanandi. Since Achanandi's name appears in many places, it can be assumed that he had enjoyed high position among the Jain Community.

¹⁷⁶ ARE (1905) No. 691-703

¹⁷⁷ Dr. Sircar O.C, Epigraphia Indica Vol-32 (Calcutta: Government of India press, 1962), p.274

¹⁷⁸ Dr. Sircar O.C, South Indian Inscriptions Vol-14, The Pandyas (Madras: Government of India press, 1962), p.85

Gunaveera Kuravadigal

An inscription, dating back to the Varakunan Period mentions the donation of 501 kanambons by Santivirakuravar, a student of Gunavirak Kuravadigal. He is not Gunaveerapandithar, who wrote the Vachanandi Malai.

Mallisenan and Indrasenan

The important names, Mallisenan and Indrasenan are found in the inscriptions. The title, Senan, was given by the Jains only to those who were advanced in all arts.

Pattini Kurathi

The names of Bhavanantik Kurathi and his teacher Pattinikuratyar are also mentioned.

Places Mentioned in the Inscription

Venpunadu and Andanadu Nalkur Kolumam, Guvanacherry, Kudalur, Sriperumpathi Ur, Sri Vadapalli, Sri Ayyapalli and Sri Airai Malaith Devar are mentioned in the inscription.¹⁷⁹ These may have been the places where the Jains had preached.¹⁸⁰

In the inscription, we can see that gold was generally given as a gift. The merchants have given more donations to the Jains. When they give, instead of donating goats and land, they had given only cash and gold. Although the name of the merchants is not mentioned in the Aivarmalai inscription, it can be assumed that they may have been merchants as they had donated money. The Meenakshipuram inscription mentions Vellarai Nigamador as Kodiyor. A corporation means a city or a business body. The Pugalur inscription refers to Pugalur Ponvanigan. From this evidence, we can know that the merchants also provided material support to the Jain leaders.

¹⁷⁹ ARE (1905) No. 691-703.

¹⁸⁰ Dr. Sircar O.C, South Indian Inscriptions Vol-14, The Pandyas (Madras: Government of India press, 1962), p.86

In the Aivarmalai inscription, it is indicated that the people from Kolumam contributed materially. It is believed that there was a highway from Anai Hill, and it went through Kollum. Colombo may have been a trading post along the way. Jains generally chose their abode near the city. For example, Meenakshipuram is close to Madurai City and Bukhlur and Karur are close to this idea. The donors in Colombo were probably merchants. In this inscription, the names of Gudiyan Movenan Kavirichinagan Aramvichi Varathapani, Indrasenan, Mallisenan etc. are mentioned. The name, Nagan, appears in the Velayuthampalayam inscription.¹⁸¹ It is believed that Archuna attained Pasupadam at Aivarmalai. It is also said that the Panchapandavars used to hide in this place during their exile and because of the presence of five people, it is said that the name Panchapandavar Hill or Ivarmalai might have been attributed to it.

Ivarmalai

At Ivarmalai, the worship of Thiroupathi Amman, Murugan and Ramalinga adigal is conducted. People of this area conduct weddings here. Shivaratri festival is celebrated every year. Karthikai deepam festival is also celebrated.¹⁸²

Arachalur

Three Jain inscriptions, from the Second Century A.D. were discovered in Arachalur. There is an inscription, reading “ezhuthum punaruthan maniya vannakkan devan sathan”, on a Jain bed in the Arachalur Hills. Punaruthan is a variant of the word, Punarthan, which means, organised. The two other inscriptions contain musical syllables, that are identical when read from left to right and vice versa, as well as when read from the top of a column to the bottom and vice versa. The organisation of musical syllables by

¹⁸¹ Dr. Sircar O.C, Epigraphia Indica Vol-32 (Calcutta: Government of India press, 1962), p.337

¹⁸² Manomani T, Kolumam Kumaralingam Aivarmalai (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), p.13

“Maniyan Vannakkan Devan Sathan” is evident in these two inscriptions.¹⁸³ This inscription is centuries older than the “Kudumiyaalai inscriptions” on music and it is from the same era as Silappadikaram.

The Kongu Jains made a significant contribution to Tamil. It must have been Kongu Vellala Jain who wrote Perunkathai, which was based on Durvineetha’s Brihatkatha. A Sanskrit inscription, found in the Vijayamangalam Jain Temple describes the beauty of Perunkathai. This temple was constructed in 678 A.D. Therefore, around this time, Konguvelir must have resided in Vijayamangalam.

Jain Structural Temples

Shri 1008 Bhagwan Chandraprabhu Swami Digambar Jain Temple, Vijayamangalam, Tamil Nadu

Vijayamangalam is situated in Erode District.¹⁸⁴ Located in 11°31’ latitude N and 77°49’ longitude E. It can be inferred from the coins found there that Vijayamangalam used to be a place for merchants. Vijayamangalam was once a place where Jains lived large number. There is an ancient Jain temple, which is attached to Adinathar Temple and Chandraprabha Tirthankar Temple.¹⁸⁵ Statues of five of the Sangam poets, seated with scrolls in their hands, are also found in the temple. This temple has been the head of all Jain temples in Kongu Nadu.¹⁸⁶ Inscriptions mentioned it as “Veera Sangatha Perumpalli”.¹⁸⁷ The Temple gained importance when Puliyammai, the younger sister of the minister of Mysore, practised Sallekhana (religious fasting to death by facing north) here.

¹⁸³ Dr. Rasu S, Erode Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 1 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), pp.198-214

¹⁸⁴ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Coimbatore District (Madras, 1966), p.412

¹⁸⁵ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.66

¹⁸⁶ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.7

¹⁸⁷ Dr. Rasu S, Erode Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 3 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), pp.72-83

In Vijayamangalam, there also is a Shiva temple, mentioned in the inscriptions as Nageeswaramudayar, a Vishnu temple, mentioned in the inscriptions as Kariyamanikka Perumal, the modern Vijayapuri Amman Temple, Vinayagar Temple and Mariamman Temple.¹⁸⁸

Jain sites around Vijayamangalam

Ivar Malai

There are many natural caves, Jain sculptures and inscriptions, discovered in this study area. Kongu Mandala Sathagam highlights the Ivar Hill as the place where the Gallara Flower (Red Water lilly) blooms. There is the Pandya king, Varakuna's inscription, traced to 870 A.D. This inscription refers to the Ivar Hills as Tiruvairai. The inscription also mentions that Santiveerakuravar, student of Gunaveera Kuravadi, restored the sculpture of Parshuvanathar. The inscriptions refer to sages like Achananti, Indrasenar, Mallisenar Periyar and Parshuva. Kuratiyars like Perumbattiyur Pattinikuratthi and her student, Manaki Bhuvvananti Kurathi are also mentioned. Achananti also appears in inscriptions, found in other parts of Tamil Nadu.

Vellode

South facing Rishabanathar Temple is situated in Vellode.

Poonthurai

Parsavanatha Temple is located here. The inscription, indicating the restoration work during the Mysore Udaiyar Period, is found in a damaged condition.¹⁸⁹

Thingalur

The name of this town is Chandrapuri. The temple of Pushpanatha Tirthankar, the ninth Tirthankar, is located in the temple garden. It is a temple with three halls. There is a

¹⁸⁸ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State (Coimbatore and Salem), 1968, p.66

¹⁸⁹ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.37

statue of Brahma Iyakkan in Arthamandapam. There is an idol of Seethala Tirthankar in the front hall.

Senkapalli

This town was known as Senket Pali. A Jain temple here has been destroyed.

Chinapuram

Sanakapuri and Sanakapuram are the other names for this place. There is a temple of the first Tirthankar Adinath at a place called Mamuttithoppu.

Nirambai

Nirambai is a ruined town between Vijayamangalam and Chinapuram.

Arasanna Hill

This Hill is located to the south of Vijayamangalam. On top of the Hill, which is about 500 feet high, there are the Neminathar Temple and Iyakkini Temple. There is a small village called Konkampalayam, at the foot of the Hill. The women in the village are named 'Arasatal', in honor of Yakshi. The sculpture of the Yakshi is now in the Vijayamangalam Jain temple.¹⁹⁰

Vijayamangalam and Jainism

This town may have been named, Vijayamangalam, because of the success achieved by the Jains in their efforts to establish their religion in Kongu Nadu.¹⁹¹ Vijayamangalam has been praised by many scholars as Tamil Mangai and Mangai Mahanagar. Vijayamangalam is the most special of the Jain places in Kongu Nadu. There is a Jain temple built here in the 10th Century. To the eastern side of this temple, there is a small unfinished temple. The oldest of the inscriptions in this temple mentions Puliyamma, the younger sister of Chamundarayan, the commander of the Ganga kings. An inscription,

¹⁹⁰ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.38

¹⁹¹ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.66

dated 1163 A.D., attributed to Kongu Cholan Kulothungan, mentions ‘Veerasangata Perumpalli’. The history of Adinath has been displayed through relief in this temple.

Kongu Velir

Konguvel or Kongavel, was the leader of Kongu Nadu Velir like Alundurvel, Irungovel, Nankurvel, Aivel. Velir was a king belonging to the Vellalar community. He was born in a town called Vijayamangalam in Kongu Nadu in 7th Century A.D. According to Perunkathai, Vijayamangalam was the capital of his kingdom.¹⁹²

Temples

Shiva temple, Amman temple, Vishnu temple, Jain temple are ancient temples in Vijayamangalam. There are also new temples like Amman temple, Vinayagar temple and Mariamman temple.

Jain Temple

Jainism was very prominent in Kongu Nadu. Vijayamangalam was prominent among Kongu Jain sites.¹⁹³ The people of this village call the gopuram, in front of the temple, as Nettai Gopuram and the temple, as Amaniswarar Temple. The Temple consists of sanctum sanctorum, arthamandapam, front hall and mahamandapam

There is an inscription, dated 1085 and attributed to Tribhuvana Chakravarti Kulothunga Chola. If we calculate the period according to this inscription, the period of the Temple must be 12th Century A.D.¹⁹⁴

Structure of the Temple

Sanctuary

There are Jagadi, Mupattai Kumuda, Kandam and Vedikai.

¹⁹² Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.40

¹⁹³ Nambiar P.K and Narayana Kurup K.C, Census of India 1961 - Temples of Madras State - Coimbatore and Salem (Madras, 1968), p.66

¹⁹⁴ Dr. Rasu S, Erode Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 3 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), pp.72-83

Wall

Devakoshtam is not on the wall of sanctum sanctorum but there is Vedikai Patti.

Prastharam

As the prastharam area is covered with cement, it is not possible to know what was there in Puthavari, Kodungai, Yalivari. The size of the sanctum sanctorum varies slightly due to the wall, which is covered with cement. It is a single floored Vesara Vimana and the wall is covered with cement. The walls of the east and west sanctum are 4.20 metres in length. The length of the north wall of the sanctum is 4.28 metres.¹⁹⁵

Ardhamandapam

The width of the space between the Arthamandapam and the Front Hall is 0.30 cm on the north side and 0.60 cm on the south side. The width on the south side from west to east, is 1.62 metre.

Vestibule

Adityanam area is similar to the structure of the sanctum sanctorum. There are devakoshtas on the wall. But there are no sculptures on it. The makara thorana, from the mouth of a lion or yali, comes on either side of the karnakudu. Four semi pillars are attached to the wall inside the vestibule.

Mahamandapam

There are six full pillars and two half pillars inside the hall. One of these six pillars has an image of Pulyammai. There is a square at the bottom of the pillar and a eight band structure at the top, followed by a square and again eight band and then the square podigai.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.55

¹⁹⁶ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam, Op. Cit., p.63

Prayer Hall

There is a mandapam with a total of sixteen pillars. The wall, that surrounded the hall, except for the entrance, has been removed now.

Compound

There is only one outer circle. In the northeast corner of this circle, there is a portion of the temple, that was unfinished. The bali peetam is also in this circle. The lower part of the wall is made of black stone and the upper part is made of brick with a tall tower in front.

Gopuram

In Tamil Nadu, temple gopurams are unique. A gopuram is a structure that adorns the gate of a temple.¹⁹⁷ The Gopuram in the Vijayamangalam Jain temple has a three storeyed structure, in which the bottom is built of stone, and the upper floors are built of mud. Gopuram was built around 14th Century A.D.

Sculptures in Jain Temple

Chandra Prabha Tirthankar

There is a sculpture of Chandra Prabha Tirthankara on a small stone in the sanctum.¹⁹⁸ He is seated in yoga posture on Padma Peedam. There is a small tree (Banyan tree) behind the crown. The Prabha Mandalam is located in the area between the crown and the Tirthankara's head. On either side of him are two waist length figures with Saamaram. Tirthankara has long ears. He is placed in a sitting position with the right leg up and the left leg down, with the right arm up and the left arm down on the lap.

¹⁹⁷ Crispin Branfoot, "The Tamil Gopura: From Temple Gateway to Global Icon", *ARS Orientalis* (Vol. 45, 2015)

¹⁹⁸ Ramaswami Ayyangar M.S and Seshagiri Rao B, *Studies in South Indian Jainism* (Madras: HOE & Co, 1922), p.60

Mahavira

A sculpture of Mahavira is placed on the pedestal in the Arthamandapam. He is in a seated position, with left leg down and right leg up on Padma Peedam. There is a tiara. There is something like a plant at the back. There is a lion figure on the pedestal.¹⁹⁹

Adinatha Tirthankar

Makara thoranas, with engravings from the lion's mouth above the crown come on either side. He is in a seated position in padmasana yoga posture. The eyes are fully closed, the eyebrows are well arched up, with long ears. Three lines are seen on the abdomen. No clothes are found on this naked figure. Both sides are directed by Komugan and Chakreshwari figures are small in size.²⁰⁰

Iyakkan

Iyakkan is portrayed as a figure, with a human body and a bull's head. There is the figure of Rishabha, below the Iyakkan.

Iyakki

Iyakki is in a standing position, with the right leg slightly bent forward and the left leg straight. There is an eagle figure below the Iyakki. Below the Tirthankar is a Nandi figure facing right.

Kushmandini (Dharmadevi)

Iyakki, the twenty second Tirthankara, is in a seated position, on a pedestal. There is a crown, with a small image of Nemi Tirthankar. Ornament is shown above it. A group of tufts are found in the ears. On the neck, there is aram and mangalya. There are two hands. On the right hand, there is a lotus flower and on the left hand, there is dola hasta. The pedestal is similar to that of the lingam. There is a lion on the pedestal. A small

¹⁹⁹ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.73

²⁰⁰ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam, Op. Cit., p.74

Kushmandinian sculpture is also in a Jain temple, standing on the padma posture. To the right, there are two figures, seated on a lion. Another sculpture, slightly larger than this, is outside without a head.²⁰¹

Sculptures of Poets

There are five sculptures of poets in the Jain temple. A scroll is found on the left hand. One of these sculptures is large and the others are slightly smaller. Apart from these sculptures, there is also a sculpture of a woman.²⁰²

Kongu Velir

The sculpture is seen sitting in a padmasana posture on a small pedestal. The front hall has relief sculptures of four Tirthankaras, from the south to north directions. On the other two sides, there are relief sculptures of figures like elephants, lion, yali.

The history of Adinath is carved in reliefs in the mahamandapam. There are also bas reliefs of Dikpalakas like Indra, Agni, Eman, Nriti, Varuna, Vayu, Kubera, Isanan, with their vehicles.²⁰³

Hero Stones of Vijayamangalam

The Jain temple pillar inscription uses the phrase, Puliyammai Nishitikai Kal, sister of Srisamundarayan. If the Jains die by the Salleganai fast, a commemorative stone, called Nishitika Kal, is erected in their memory. A pillar inside the temple has Mahavira at the top and a Jain lady at the bottom. There is an inscription on the same pillar, that belongs to the 10th Century A.D. In Erode, there is a person called Pulikuthi Nachimuthu. One of his ancestors died after stabbing a tiger to save the village in Vijayamangalam area. Within the boundary of the house, there is the hero stone.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.75

²⁰² Ibid.,

²⁰³ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam, Op. Cit., p.76

²⁰⁴ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam, Op. Cit., p.85

Copper statues of Vijayamangalam

Vijayamangalam has copper statues dating from the 15th Century to the 17th Century A.D. Kevala Chandrasekar Parvathi and Sivakami and Ganapathi are traced to 15th Century A.D. Tirumal, Sridevi, Boodevi statues are beautiful. Raman, Lakumanan and Sita devi statues are traced to 19th Century A.D. Murugan, Valli and Deivayanai statues look very elegant.²⁰⁵

Painting

The painting is on the wall of the sanctum sanctorum in the Chandraprabha Dithankara Temple at Vijayamangalam.²⁰⁶

Epigraphic Messages

It is not possible to say with certainty how many inscriptions there are in Vijayamangalam. More than half of the inscriptions have been destroyed. In the Annual Report on Epigraphy – 1905, a total of 57 inscriptions have been published. A total of ten inscriptions, numbered 267 to 276 in Part 1 of South Indian Temple Charters, four inscriptions numbered 1091 to 1094 in Part 3 and one inscription numbered 1157 in Part 3, have been published.²⁰⁷

In the inscriptions at Vijayamangalam, Kongu Chola, Kongu Pandyar, Bhosala, Vijayanagara are mentioned. There are some inscriptions, without royal lineage. The inscriptions cover the period from the 10th Century to 15th Century A.D.

There are a total of five inscriptions in Jain temple. There is one inscription of Kongu Chola, one inscription of Vijayanagara, and three inscriptions, with no reference to any king. The oldest of the inscriptions refers to Puliyammai in Jain temple. This inscription may belong to the 10th Century A.D.

²⁰⁵ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.86

²⁰⁶ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam, Op. Cit., p.90

²⁰⁷ Dr. Rasu S, Erode Mavatta Kalvettukal Vol. - 3 (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2007), pp.72-83

In the inscriptions, Perumal is mentioned as Chitromezhi Vinnagarempurman Kariyamanikalvar. Chitromezhi refers to the People's Assembly of Velankudi. They were marked as Chitromezhi Periyantavar.

The Director of Archaeological Survey of Tamil Nadu has mentioned Chitromezhi Periyantavar. People who lived by agriculture as their occupation, though they lived in many parts of the Nadu, they considered themselves to be of the same race and religion. They had plow as their deity and hence they got the name. They claimed themselves to be the people of Bhuma Devi. The Vellalar community, in the name of Chitromezhi Natar, was a prominent feature in Tamil Nadu for many centuries. Inscriptions in the Vishnu temple indicate that the people of Velankudi had donated.

Village and People

Majority of people, living in Vijayamangalam, were engaged in agriculture and weaving. At present, loom and weaving industry is the most prominent.²⁰⁸

An ancient Jain Temple at Alangadu, in Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu

The 24th Jain Thirthankar, Lord Adinath, is honoured in the Alangadu Jain Temple.²⁰⁹ An idol of Lord Adinath and an idol of Lord Neminath, who is thought to be the 22nd Thirthankar of the Jains, are placed in this ancient temple. It is one of the well known Jain shrines and it is found in Alangadu in the Tirupur District, about 12 kilometers from Uthukuli.²¹⁰ This Temple is considered to be hundreds of years old. Despite being so old, not many people appear to be aware of it. Its presence is only known to a small number of Jain families and some residents of the neighbourhood.

A Digambar Jain family, travels a great distance from Mysore, to perform a puja at the temple. They claim that their family has been carrying it out for centuries. Despite being

²⁰⁸ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.119

²⁰⁹ Ramaswami Ayyangar M.S and Seshagiri Rao B, Studies in South Indian Jainism (Madras: HOE & Co, 1922), p.111

²¹⁰ Dr. Ramaswami A, Madras District Gazetteer, Coimbatore District (Madras, 1966), p.411

a relatively small shrine, the artistically carved god and goddess images on the temple pillars, can fascinate in any heritage tourist.

Unfortunately, the temple's main idol, Chandrapraba Theerthangar, was stolen in the middle of the 1990s and it has not been found yet. As a result, the temple now houses only the idols of Rishabadevar and Kushmandini.

Veerasangaatha Perumpalli - An ancient Jain Temple at Alathur, in Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu

Due to lack of preservation, the 1,100-year-old Jain temple, discovered on a twenty cent piece of land in the nearby village of Alathoor, is in danger of collapsing. The temple has a long history, according to the inscriptions. But the authorities have not noticed the building yet. After being shaken by the roots of the trees, that had grown wildly around and inside the shrine, a portion of the side walls of the temple have already collapsed.

Due to lack of maintenance, the ceilings and the wall, that create the unique elevation, are in a dilapidated state and ready to collapse at any moment. Originally known as the Veerasangaatha Perumpalli Aniyathazhaki Temple (female deity), this sacred location later acquired the name of Amaneasar Temple. The word "palli", in the shrine's original name, suggests that it has also served as a "padashala" (school) where ancient philosophies and Jain principles were taught.²¹¹

The temple is situated along the old trade route, that connected the North Kongu divisions. Study of the inscriptions reveals that Jains, who chose this guild of traders to settle here, built the shrine with the help of the traders and renovations were made, with assistance from the rulers of Kongu divisions.²¹² The last Jain families left the

²¹¹ Murugaraj A, Vijayamangalam (Chennai: State Department of Archaeology, 2009), p.39

²¹² Ramachandra Chettiar C.M, Kongunattu Varalaru (Annamalainagar: Annamalai University Publication, 1954), p.36

neighbourhood many years ago and ever since, the building has been vacant. The temple structure would collapse unless some immediate restoration work is undertaken.

The Coimbatore Archaeological Museum houses the two inscription stones. One is an eight line Tamil inscription, and another is a nine line inscription, that belonged to Konaattan Kongu Chozha King, Veerachozhan (979–980 A.D.), during the 37th regnal year. Both inscriptions mention this Perumpalli (School) land, with periphery limits.

An ancient Digambar Jain Temple at Kunnathur, in Tiruppur District, Tamil Nadu

In Kunnathur The ancient Digambar Jain Temple was constructed in Kunnathur, One thousand years ago.²¹³ This ancient Digambar Jain temple is currently in disrepair. There is an intricately carved Digambar Jain idol on a marble stone. We can see the walled off temple as well.²¹⁴

In addition to this temple, there is another building that resembles the old Jain temple. Vimana is located on the Garbhagriha of this historic Jain temple. There are beautiful green paddy fields all around this temple. The pillars of the abandoned temple are still visible on the same campus.

Special Poojas and Festivals

- Rishabha, the first Tirthankara, is honoured on Akshaya Tritiya, which also marks the end of a long period of fasting.
- Rishabha's moksha is commemorated on Jinaratri.
- Tirthankara Mahavira's birth is commemorated on Mahavir Jayanti.
- Diwali honours Mahavira's enlightenment.
- Jain Agamas are honoured by Vasanta Panchami.

²¹³ Ramaswami Ayyangar M.S and Seshagiri Rao B, Studies in South Indian Jainism (Madras: HOE & Co, 1922), p.11

²¹⁴ Ravish kumar and Das B.K, Jainism and Jain architecture (USA: Lulu, 2018), p.70

- Upaakarma honours the memory of Chakravartin Bharata, son of Rishabha, who recognised genuine scholars by bestowing the Upanayanam upon them.
- Karthikai Deepam at the beginning of the Karthika month

Fasting

At Jain Mutt, monks also observe fasts and other religious observances, such as full moon days. Days selected for fasting and religious observances include Chaturdasi (the fourteenth day of the fortnight) and Ashtami (the eighth day of the fortnight).²¹⁵ Women eat only after reciting a Tirthankara's name five times. Such actions are taken by people as a vow for a specific amount of time, sometimes even for years. Udhyanapana festivals (special prayer services) are held, and religious literature and artefacts are distributed. Some people consume food only between sunrise and sunset.²¹⁶

²¹⁵ Agustin Paniker, *Jainism: History, Society, Philosophy and Practice* (New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2017), p.457

²¹⁶ Kristi L. Wiley, *The A to Z of Jainism* (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2009), p.86