

Vol II Issue XII Jan 2013

Impact Factor : 0.2105

ISSN No : 2230-7850

Monthly Multidisciplinary
Research Journal

*Indian Streams
Research Journal*

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2230-7850

Indian Streams Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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RAMALINGA SWAMY - SIVAGAMI AMBHAL TEMPLE IN PANAGUDI: A HISTORICAL STUDY

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Abstract:

Tamilnadu is one of the grandest museums of temple. Pangudi is a historical important place of Tirunelveli District, Tamilnadu. The article explained the saivism spread and growth of this area. Many kings are ruled in panagudi. The historical name is called "panaigudi", Next "panargudi" and "panagudi". It is situated on the river bank of Hanumannathi. The Siva temple Ramalinga – Sivagami Ammal temple is of built in the early year of the 14th century. Some other dynasties are ruled in Panagudi area. Now a days many pujas and festivals are conducted by the local peoples.

KEY WORDS

Temple copper plate, change of life, saivism, History, society.

INTRODUCTION

Tamil Nadu is one of the grandest museums of temple and a multi-religious society.¹ Temples are one such means of preserving the memory of our ancestors. Our ancestors had unquestionable faith in the statement "Let us not live in a village which is devoid of a Temple".

An attempt has been made in this article to study the history of "Ramalinga Swamy Sivagami Ambhal Temple at Panagudi. Panagudi is a big village situated on the South of Tirunelveli District in Tamil nadu. Tirunelveli as "collector of Tirunelveli" was formed in 1790 by the east Indian company.² Later came under the direct control of the British crown queen Victoria. The name Tirunelveli has been composed from the three Tamil words i.e., Thiru-Nel-Veli meaning sacred paddy hedge.³ Like other places in Tamil Nadu Panagudi is noted for its Lord Nambi Singa Perumal, Vinayaga and Amman temples. Temples which influence the social life of the people of Panagudi serve as the citable of culture and help the people to integrate and lead a peaceful life. The object of the study is to examine the truth about certain traditions noticed in the worship and in the conduct of pujas and festivals performed in the temple. This study seeks to unravel the History of Ramalinga Swamy Sivagami Ambhal temple in Panagudi from early times to the present day. It is one of the Siva temples in Panagudi. Knowing the historical significance of the Ramalinga Swamy Sivagami Ambhal Temple at Panagudi.

SIVAIN EARLY TAMIL LITERATURE

In Tamil country there flourished a far flung culture which though tinged with notions of Aryanism had its own individual trait. A rich literature known as of the sangam age brings to the limelight the religious practices of the people. The earliest literary work. Tolkappiyam divides the country into five topographical segments and assigns each region a deity.⁴ Tamil Nadu had not only felt the impact of Aryan culture but also accommodated two of their major deities. Very strangely, Siva or Rudra or the Sivan is not accorded a status of equality along with Visnu and Indra. Scholars suggest that Siva was lord of all tracts of land, meaning the universal god, as the Tamil hymn hail him as ennattavarkkum iravan "Lord of the lands".⁵

The name sivan as such fails to appear but the post-sangam Tamil epic, Silappatikaram (5th century A.D) notes 'Sivakati', the heaven of 'siva' who is sivan himself. The Tamil Form of Rudra, Uruttiran, as such fails to appear but sangam poets had the names uruttirankannanar one whose eyes were like those of Rudra (author of pattinappalai and Perumpanarruppatai) and Uruttiranar (Rudra), author of Kurincippattu. The Silappatikaram notes the name of a king of north India who was known as Uruttivan (Rudran)⁶. These suggest the fact that sivan and uruttiran were not unknown to the sangam Tamils.

The post-sangam period Buddhism and Jainism seem to have established their hold over the Tamil Country and so there was revival of Saivism and Vaisnavism around the 5th century A.D⁷ along with the Devi cult, especially Pallini, as extolled in the Silappatikaram⁸. The Tamil Nayanmar, Totally sixty three⁹ in number, lived during a vast time span (5th to the 12th centuries A.D) and systematically propagated their religious under the aroma of the new bhakti cult¹⁰. The Nayanmars hailed from all castes.¹¹ Northern Tamil Nadu came under the influence of Navukkarasar who converted the pallava king, to begin with a Jain to Saivism. Southern Tamilnadu from the jain kun pandya was recovered for saivism by Gnanasampantar. Earlier Karaikalammaiyar and other saints had taken the initiatives¹². It was only in the early 7th century A.D. that Saivism was able to establish its stronghold. These saints propounded the rudiments of Saiva Siddhanta which was to have a longlasting impact on Tamil culture and religious history.¹³

SAIVASIDDHANTA

The most outstanding contribution of Tamil Nadu to Saivism is the Saiva Siddhanta philosophy, the rudiments of which might be found in the early Nayanmar hymns (down to Sundarar 8th century A.D.) and later developed by experts in the field. Though scholars trace the roots of this school in Kashmiri Saivism, its individuality is proclaimed by the Tamil works. The Tamil bhakti and its offshoot¹⁴. Which were compiled under the Tirumurai series was the work of Nampi Antarnampi¹⁵, who in the 11th century A.D. undertook the onerous.

Job under the inspiration of Rajaraja-I. The mass of palm leaves were collected and compiled under twelve tirumurais "book of the holy order"¹⁶.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

The study of the origin of a temple is beset with problems. The word "Temple" generally stands for the present edifice and its environs. The edifice as it stands at the time of study might contain at least some earlier structures with certain architectural features and epigraphs that may help in deducing the probable age of the temple.

Every temple had its library known as saraswathy pandaram. A temple has to be considered as the space enclosing and organized around an installed deity. It is known by the evidence of both literary and epigraphic to exist continuously through the ages. In these cases it becomes necessary to look for other methods of determining the origins. It is here that a large number of myth legends and other traditional lore containing seeds of truth available have to be investigated to discover the origins of the deity and subsequently the organized space around it.

Thousands of Temples are found all over Tamil Nadu. Hence Tamil Nadu may be called a veritable museum of temples. This is established by an old Tamil saying "Koyil illa oorill kudiirukka vendam" (let us not-live in a place which is devoid of a temple) Besides these, evidences got from field studies tell us that there are hundreds of temples in all the nooks and corners of Tamil Nadu.¹⁷

Saivism is a siva philosophy, three kinds of saivism in our country. They are Kashmir saivism,¹⁸ Vira saivism or Lingayata¹⁹ and Siddhandha saivism²⁰. Siddhandha saivism is followed the most of the people in our country.

The Pandias one of the very ancient Tamil dynasties ruled over the southern part of Tamil Nadu²¹. Those days they built so many temples which are famous for architecture, culture and art. In Tirunelveli district, Panagudi Town Panchayat still pronounces the pride of pandias through the temple.

ANTIQUITY OF PANAGUDI

The village Panagudi is situated on the river bank of the Hanumanadhi,²² the south west tip of Tirunelveli District in Tamil Nadu. Panagudi is bounded by Radhapuram on the east, Vallioor on the north, Kavalkinaru on the south and Western Ghats on the west. It is located twenty seven kilometers north of Nagercoil. Till AD 94 to AD 140 it was the head-quarters of Aai-Andhiran King. After him Nedunchedian Pandian captured Panagudi.²³ Then Kochadaiyan ruled Aal Aaya (al aya) (Panagudi) from 700 AD to

730AD. But he was under it reign of Nedunchedaiyan. Kochadaiyan was a small king in Panagudi. He fought against Aaya king and he met in maruthur battle. After the war, he captured Panagudi and ruled panagudi. (Ramalinga Swamy Temple plate supports this event).²⁴

Next Maravarman ruled in Panagudi from 860AD to 880AD²⁵. Many Brahmins were settled in Panagudi, the period of Maravarman. They were conducted the pujas and festivals in the temple. That time kalakadu was ruled by Varaguna Pandian whose Southern boundary was Panagudi.²⁶

Then Uddhamarthandapandya built this temple and vasantha Madam²⁷. Till AD1216 it was ruled by Kulasekara Pandian²⁸. Then till AD.1190 to A.D.1322 it was ruled by Virapandia, Maravarman and Sundra pandian²⁹. From A.D.1484 to A.D.1515 it was reigned by Krishna Devaraya of Vijayanagar Empire. But Udaya Marthandavarman captured in Panagudi and ruled the place³⁰. Then Panagudi ruled by Vishvanaltha nayak of Madurai, Ramaiya nayak Rani Mangamma and Rani Meenakshi³¹. At present it is the head quarters of the Panagudi Town panchayat. After the bifurcation of the Radhapuram Taluk, Panagudi lies within the areas of two parts. The total area of the village is 49 square kilometers. The population of the village 26,987 (census report 2011)

LEGENDARY ORIGIN OF THE VILLAGE

The origin of the name “Panagudi” is still shrouded in mystery. The village has been originally known as “Uddhama Pandiapuram”³², as it was once ruled by Uddhama Pandian. The derivation of the name 'Panagudi' is very interesting. It is a combination of the Tamil words 'Panam' and 'Gudi' “the money-place” or treasury³³. The term 'Panam' refers to the place of money the other term 'Gudi' means 'living place', 'people'. The historical period is called as “Panaigudi”³⁴ then 'Panagudi', 'Panargudi' the area is known as the “Muratha Nadu”.³⁵

LOCATION OF THE TEMPLE

The siva temple at Panagudi called as “Ramalinga Swamy – Sivagami Ambhal Temple” is situated at the North western side of big western ghat in the Panagudi village, Radhapuram Taluk, Tirunelveli District. The surrounding sides have been classified as temple poramboku and occupy 15.20 acres. The Principal temple is one dedicated to Siva under the name Ramalingaswami, curiously enough, it contains a small Vaishnavite temple inside it.³⁶ The Temple has been beautified by Gopura Mandapam in front of it and Pottamaraikulam on the east. There is a separate sannathi for Sivagami, Nambi Singa perumal Natarajar, Dekshanamurthi, Kasivishvanathar, Meenakshiamman, Murugan, Kannivinayagar Surian Sandiran Sanishwarar and Parikara Devars. It is a peculiar feature in this temple. The molasthanas of lord Ramalingar and Sivagami have been carved out side the stone walls. It is really a big stone temple in the Radhapuram Taluk, in Tirunelveli District.

LEGEND AND HISTORY OF THE TEMPLE

A legend narrates the history of the Panagudi siva temple, that was situated once upon a time in the south pandia country ruled over by pandias. These pandias are also known as Madurai pandias, Thenkasi pandias, pancha pandias and Iyvar Rajas. The chera and pandia kings who ruled over the region for sometime, Ramalinga Temple built in the early years of the 14th century³⁷. The first this temple is called Sotta Narayanam³⁸. Uddhama pandia came to the temple to worship Ramalinga and arranged for Pujas and Festivals in the temple. Festivals is an occasion when the aspects of life like Jay, Beauty, richness, magnificence, harmony are all emphasized.³⁹ At that time he came to know that Lord Siva was peacefully residing in the store naturally situated Panagudi area. Then he constructed the front mandapam. It is said that a shepherds brought to the notice of the king the stone temple and Lord Ramalinga. It is evident that the state of the shepherd is found in southern side of lord Siva shrine. After the reign of Uddhama Pandia Raja, his successors did Thirupani to this temple in the year 14th century. Further the many Chera and Pandia kings did Thiruppani after the 14th century. So saivism is spread in the areas. Most of the people are worshiped in the temple. Saivism is growth of the peace, love, believe, and blessing.

TEMPLE HISTORY FROM EPIGRAPHY

Epigraphy is the most fruitful sources of ancient history⁴⁰. Almost invariable the records of the Pandia, Cheras who ruled in Tirunelveli at the time of the decline of the Pandias power in 15th century and later period was called 'saka era'.⁴¹

Inscriptions provided us with a lot of materials to trace the history of this temple. Hence the study of the history of the temple in the light of evidences available an epigraphy.

An appointment order was engraved on an inscription which is found on the southern part was of the mandapa in front of the central shrine of lord Ramalinga.

The Siva temple dedicated to Ramalinga is popularly believed that Uddhama Pandia Raja one of the king of Thenkasi Pandias it contains an inscription of the early years of the 14th century which records grants from a ruler named Uddhama Pandian and another inscription which mention the same name.

The foundation of the Vishnu temple dedicated to Nambi Singa Perumal as also of this temple is ascribed by the same king.

At present the temple is under the control and supervision of the executive officer, Hindu Religious and charitable endowment, Government of Tamil Nadu. It has recommended the reconstruction of the temple gopuram and other renovation works. The study made above shows the historicity of the temple and its popularity among the people in and around Panagudi.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that the Ramalinga Sivagami Ambhal Temple at panagudi was previously a stone temple meant for the Jain Thirthankaras. With the decline of Jainism, Buddhism and the emergence of Saivism and Vaishnavism which considered with the Bakthi movement, a number of temples of the Jains and Buddhists were changed into a restructured Saivite or Vaishnavite temples. Some of the remnants, very strong tradition in and around Panagudi and even the model of the stone structure itself established. However in the later days especially under the later pandias many more additions were made in the temple, making it a temple complex. Though its history is shrouded in mystery, it is believed that Uddhama Pandia made this temple a big temple complex, with inner and outer prakaras at present, as the temple stands there is every reason to call it a Saivite temple dedicate to lord Ramalinga - Sivagami Ambhal and Lord Nambi Singa Perumal. The pujas of this temple can be classified into daily and monthly pujas. They conduct eight times daily. Special pujas are conducted every Friday in order to glorify Lord Ramalinga.

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