
A CRITICAL VIEW OF THIRUVENKADAMUD AIYAN TEMPLE

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Abstract

This micro-level study on the history of the Venkatamudaiyan Sannidhi on the south mada street at Srivilliputtur town takes only the Andal temple and the three streets surrounding the edifices of Sri Andal and that of Vadapatrasayi. The history of Srivilliputtur and its temples is given only to provide the required backdrop to the reader. Similarly the problem of the arrival of the Thathacharya families as well as the lineage and ancestry of the Srinivasacharyar family are the present controller of the Thiruvekatamudaiyan Sannidhi.

Keywords: *sampradaya, Tiruvekatam mountains, Alvars, Nadumunigal, Pandiamangalam*

Introduction

The present study on the Tiruvekatamudaiyan [Lit: Shrine of the lord whose abode is the Tiruvekatam mountains (Srinivasa)] temple located at the South Mada Street at Srivilliputtur is aimed at solving the important problems in the social history of Southern Tamil Nadu.

1. Date of arrival of the Thathacharyas into Pandiamangalam.
2. Advent of the Telugu speaking Nayakkar families under the religious guidance of Vinjimurars (Lit: Vaishnavate gurus from Vinjimur in the Nellore District of Andhra Pradesh)
3. Role of single shrine temples in the propagation of Bhakti and religious Knowledge.

The VinjimurThathacharyas

History of Vaishnavism in Srivilliputtur region runs along the Southern sect (Thenkalai). It takes its traditions and sampradaya to the days of Sri Ramunja, the founder of the Visishtadvaita philosophy. Dualism with special place for the goddess of wealth gained prominence in South india in the 13th Century A.D. After the holy and hoary days of Alvars, the line of preceptors was taken over by the great line of Acharyas like Vedanta DesikaSriman Nadumunigal and Emberumanar. Temple traditions of Srivilliputtur point to the great contributions made by a line of preceptors called Thathacharyas. The Tiruvekatamudaiyan Sannidhi the subject of this article is associated with the Thathacharya families belonging to Vinjimur a place located near Tirumalai (Tirupati) in Andhra Pradesh.

Meaning of Thathacharyas

Various theories are available about the advent and prevalence of Thathacharyas at this place. The temple rituals speak of a service called ARAIYAR SEVA during which experts born in a Thathacharya family above the presiding deity with a parrot made of fine leaves and natural products. Those families belong to the Thirukkurungudi tradition of Sri Vaishnavism. The family groups of Kanpur Iyengar living in the north Mada Streetof Andal Temple trace their descent from the Thathacharya called KotiKanniKadanam from Kumbakkonam in Thanjavur District. But the TirumalaiVinjimurur families attached to the Tiruvekatamudayan Sannidhigive a different perception. According to one of the representatives Sri V.E. Sadagopachariyar, the word THATHACHARYA means SVAYAM

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ACHARYAM one who himself can serve as a perception. He further explained that every head of a Vinjimurar family is authorized to preach five great truths to his eldest son.

- DATTAM (Putting the Thiruman on the forehead)
- NAMAM (Giving the SarmaNama)
- PUNDRAM (Putting the Sacred symbol on the body in 12 places)
- MANDRAM (Initiation into Brahmacharya)
- YAGNYAM (Initiation into the art of performing Homa)

Shri Sadogopachariar further informed this write on that every family has its own set of Mantras to be preserved and recited, on auspicious occasions. A clear historical indicator on the emergence of the Thathacharya families of the Northern tradition appears to be the Srivilliputtur charter of Queen Meeenakshi. During the field survey it was learnt that all the families of the TirumalaiVinjimur. Thathacharyas are born in KausikaGotram. There are at least ten Vinjimur families at Srivilliputtur. All of them are attached to the ArulalaPerumalSannidhiin the Kuppannaiyengar Mandapam (TiruvekatamudaiyarSannidhi). All the families are descendent of one MANNAR IYENGAR. Fortunately for students if History details of are the Vinjimurar family are available in the form of a genealogical chart in the possession of Shri. Srirangan lived in the west Mada Streetof the Andal temple at Srivilliputtur. The KuppannayangarMandapam is at least four hundred years old.

The Tiruvekatamudaiyan Sannidhi

The TiruvekatamudaiyanSannidhi at Srivilliputtur follows the same ground – plan important aspects of the monuments are described. Temple records of the Andal Temple refer to this Sannadhi as KUPPANNAIYENGAR MANDAPAM. Court records calls this as TIRUVENKATAMUDAIYAN SANNIDHI, and the invitations and pamphlets published by the Akudacav it as SRI TIRUVENKATAMUDAIYAN - SRI ARULALAPPERUMAL SANNIDHI.

Plan of the Sannidhi

From North to South the TiruvekatamudaiyanSannidhi connects the south mada street next to the Sri Andal Temple and the south mada street to the south of it. The entire Sannidhi complex measures an area of 120 feet x 24 feet. The Sannidhi starts with the KODHAI AMMANGA KURADU with some steps leading to the MANIMANADAPAM area. There are raised platforms with a pair of pillars on the East and West covering the entire Width. The super structure on the entrance bears the secret Name of the Southern type (Thenkalai), and a small gopura. Manimandapam has the personal library of Shri Srinivasachariar on the left and Kitchen rooms and a small well on the right hand side. The space between the Manimandapa and the inner pillared mandapa is covered with reinforced concrete at a considerable height higher than the roof of the CHOLAPURAM NAYAKKAR mandapa, as the front portion of the pillared mandapa is called. The Mahamandapa in front of the central sannidhi is having three arches and a set of modern pillar. The area covered by the next three pairs of pillars was erected by a wealthy Nayakkar family of Cholahapuram a village located at a distance of about 5kms from Rajapalayam. All the pillars have portrait sculptures of the donors. The mandapa area in front of CholaNayakkarmandapa was caused to be erected by Shri Kuppannaiengar.

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His portrait is found on the ceiling left side of that mandapa. After the pillared mandapa one enters the mukhamandapa. It is slightly raised and approachable by a set of from the mandapa. A narrow ambulatory goes round the central shrine. There are approach steps from it leading to the central shrine. The central shrine has presiding deity Lord Srinivasa also called Tiruvenkatamudaiyan. It is a simple and elegant idol of Arulalapperumal facing east. The frontal walls of the Central shrine bear the paintings of Dvarapalakas and the Thenkalaiparaphernelias. A small entrance on the eastern wall leads one of the rest house areas. It can also be approached from the gate on the south car street. The rest house consists of two floors. Base floor is square in base floor is square in plan with a marriage hall and some rooms for the use of the parties performing the marriages. There is an interesting tablet on the side wall of the flight of steps recording the constructions of the CholaNayakkar Mandapam by a lady member of a Nayakkar family. In the tablet one can read names like Kondama Nayakkar Venkita Nayakkar Thayarkodhai Ammal, Ubayam and the date in Kollamera namely Third Day of Adi in 1104.

Festivals of the Sannidhi

The distinctive feature in the Sannidhi is the offerings given to Arulalapperumanar on important days. A daily service in the Sannidhi includes the recitation of Dharios and the vazhiTirinamam. Karthigai festival lasts for 10 days starting from the day of puradam and ending with the day of Bharani Vedaparayanam and Prabhandagoshti are conducted on the day of Bharani the parivatta garland of Sri Andal will come to Lord Srinivas. During the AndalTirukkalyanam in the month of Panguni first festival will be held at the Sannidhi special poojas and Abhishegam are offered on that occasion. In the month of Ani the PeriyalvarUtsava is conducted. There is a separate offering called SURANOTSAVA lamps are bit in the evenings and students of the Vedapatasala repute the NalayiraDivyaPrabandam. Every month special poojas are offered to Lord Srinivasa of the day of Tiruvonam and on the day of Bharani to Arulalaperumal. There is a special ghostly and prabhandam offering is given. AdiBrahmotsavam is a big event in the Sannidi. The provisional images of Andal and Rangamannar are brought to this Sannidhi daily at about 10.00Am. on the first eight days. Gostly and Prabhandam recitations are done daily. The Akutar is honored by a temple garland. In Purattasi month the seventh day of the Brahmotsavam of the Vadapatrasayana temple is conducted here. Abhisayas and Alankarasare performed. There is a service called SYANOTSAVA. In olden days the idol was placed on a VETHI VER car and taken round the car streets. In the month of Margali Puja is performed daily to Lord Srinivasa on days of birth stars of great Alwars and Acharyas special Poojas are offered.

Shri Srinivasachariar mentioned some of the peculiarities of the Sannidhi as follows:

- i) Though it is a temple public worship is permitted.
- ii) There is no paid servant in the temple.
- iii) Agamantes are strictly followed.
- iv) This is the only temple where separate offerings are made to Arulalapperumal.
- v) Acharya Purusha is given prominence only in this Sannidhi.

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Conclusion

The history of TiruvenkatamudaiyanSannidhi and its associations with the Thathachariyas of TirumalaiVinjimur families are fully described. Even today all the Vinjimurar families make it a point to attend the Karthigai festival in the mandapa.The exact arrival of the Thathachariyars in Srivilliputtur is proved doubt by the discovery of the charter of Queen Meenakshi. ShriSrinivasachariar the sole owner of the Sannidhi is an institution in him. A great personality of sorts he has immense faith in the Guruparampara tradition of Arulalapperumal and wishes to maintain if for posterity.

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