

## THE VAISHNAVISM IN PANDYA COUNTRY – A STUDY

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### Introduction

One of the important and interesting features of Tamilnadu was the emergence of vast temple complexes which played a vital role in the religious and cultural activities of the people. A land holders, employers and consumers of gods and services, as bank, school and museum, as hospital and theatre in short, as a nucleus which gathered round it self all that was best in the art of civilized existence and regulated them with humanness born of the spirit of Dharma. The temples were constructed by kings, in some case as a mark of their political achievement.<sup>1</sup>

The ancient Tamils lived close to nature and appeared highly spiritual by habit. Accordingly they entertained their own superstitions awe about the powers of nature and forms of worship. By and large these centered on the Dravidian religion and culture, which were wide spread in the sub continent in later periods Jainism and Buddhism from North India and Christianity from west Asia reached the Tamils.<sup>2</sup> The Hindu temples, like the religion which it represents, have had a long history. Its genesis has been a matter of controversy, some tracing it to the burial site, others to the hero stone of old, and so on. There is no doubt that in pre-historic times the worship of images in the open, possibly under trees, preceded the erection of temples. Though image worship was common among the people of the Indus valley culture of old, and though they had attained a remarkable measure of progress in the art of building, there is little evidence to show that temples as such had been erected by them.<sup>3</sup>

In North and Central India the early structures were either rock-cut temples or those built of wood. In the South, for quite a long time they were constructed only of wood or of bricks and mortar. However, the systematic construction of stone temples began in the South with Mahendravarma I, the pallava king known as 'Vichitrachitha'. Many efforts have been made to express in a few words the precise meaning of architecture and its relation to human experience. Lethaby has approached the subject most nearly in stating that Architecture is the "matrix of civilization"<sup>4</sup>.

Principal kingdom which ruled in the south of India during the course of its evolution.1 Pallava (AD 600-900). 2. Chola (900-1150).3. Pandya (1100-1350). 4. Vijayanagar (1350-1565).5. Madura (from 1600). Of all the great powers that together made the history of south India .We have seen that the 7 th century was the period of triumph of Brahmanism with its Siva and Vishnu cults.<sup>5</sup>

### The Spread of Vaishnavism in Pandya Country

The classical works and the sangam literature shed light on the customs and beliefs of the ancient Tamils.<sup>6</sup> in the Silapathigaram and in the Manimegalai a number of temples are mentioned.<sup>7</sup> among them Tholkappiyam makes it clear that the people shared in the Dravidian forms of worships. An ancient temple of Muruga was discovered at a place called subramanya in the tulu country. Mayon was worshipped as the lord mullai or pasture land.<sup>8</sup> In fact the ancient Tamils had their own religion in the Dravidian forms of worship their own deities, their own shrine usually on hills, own rituals and festivals, own priest in the panas and sacred language in Tamil.<sup>9</sup> The Bhakthi movement that assumed prominence in Tamilakam under the



Pandyas and the Pallavas, represented a spiritual awakening centered on Braminical devotionalism. It was both religious and literary and worked through Saivism and Vaishnavism. In Pallava period a Vaishnavite he extended his patronage to Brahminical religion, made liberal contributions to the Brahmins, and promoted the growth of Sanskrit.<sup>10</sup> Vaishnavism was the popular sect of Hinduism. Yamunacharya propounded the visista advaita philosophy, while one of his followers Ramanuja wrote several works on theology.<sup>11</sup> In Pandya country have lot of vaishnava temple in tamil nadu. Rajagopalaswamy temple Mannar koil, Vaithamathi perumal temple in Thirukorur, Vanamamalai koil Nanguneri, Srinivasa temple in Perugulam, Srinivasa temple in Tholavili mangalam.<sup>12</sup>

The Pallava royal family professed and practiced Jainism, Saivism and Vaishnavism according to the faith and fancy of reginning monarch.<sup>13</sup> The pallavas were the first to introduce temple architecture in south India must be given up. Next to Hinduism, Jainism exerted considerable influence up on the Pandyan country. This was due to its amicable adjustments with Vaishnavism. Maravarma Sundrapandyan, patronize of vaishnavism, made land gift as pallichandam.<sup>14</sup>

The chief characterstic of Vaishnavism is the intense devotion to the personal god Vishnu, who is accepted not only as the preserver, but also as the creator and destroyer of the universe. As such, Vaishnavism is a form of Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva in favour of the one god Vishnu after called Hari. Vaishnavism is very tolerant for it is always ready to adapt itself to other creeds when winning over other religious. It first great leader is generally conceded to have been Nathamuni (824-924 AD) who is formally appointed in the srirangam temple in South India and with him began a new era of Vaishnavism.<sup>15</sup> The works of Jatavarman Sundrapandyan at Srirangam temple are clearly described by Kovil Olugu. The Srirangam temple got donation from both the Pandyas and the Hoysalas. The places were named after villages were named the Vaishnava saints like Sadagopa and gifted villages were named as Sadagopavillasam near Srivilliputhur. In the temple of Vishnu and the image of Ramanujam was kept up at the Srivaikuntham temple during Maravarman Kulasekara's time. Due to the competition between saivism and vaishnavism there arose a dispute between the two on many points and in both the temples. The vaishnava assembly is reffered in the inscription of Jatavarman Vira pandyan.<sup>16</sup> The pandya country comprises of 17 Vishnu shrine sung by the alvars. The Vaishnava achcharya succeeded the Alvars Tirunagar in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. He constricted the Ramanuja temple at Tirukkurugur. He made arrangements to settled the place called Ramanuja chaturvedi mangalam. He supported the thenkalai Vaishnava sect.<sup>17</sup>

Many vaishnava mutts also promoted that sect in Tamilnadu. Vanama malai and ahobhili mutts were the popular vaishnava mutts in Tamil nadu. The Thirunaddudayars mutts functioned from Alagar Kovil, Kulasekara mutt also were in existence there. Thirumangai mutt rendered its service from Tirugurugudi. The Arulalanthagan mutt was popular at Alwar Thirunagari. The rendered valuable service in promoting the vaishnava philosophy of Alwar and Achcharyas.<sup>18</sup> Ramanuja thus achieved his aim of vindicting the vedantic orthodoxy of the doctrine of Bhakthi as followed by the Vaishnava sect to which he belonged.<sup>19</sup>

Varaguna I was a stunch vaishnavite. He faith and devotion are revealed by his generous grants and donations assigned to various temples. The perur Vishnu temple was constructed by him. Then Srirangam temple gained a lot of benefits from him.<sup>20</sup> Cuddalagar temple situated in Madurai is one of the familiar Mangalasanam temple in Tamilnadu. In the Silapathigaram and in the Manimegalai a number of temples are mentioned he ancient structure of the temple was modified.<sup>21</sup> The Tamil litreture Sillapathigaram said river Vaigai traverse near the Cuddalagar

temple.<sup>22</sup> This temple has full architectural temple formulated by Nayakas style. Perhaps it may be the first Navagraha temple situated in vaishnava temple particularly in Divyadesam taking this as preleve many vaishnava temple has add the Navagraha structure in due force.<sup>23</sup>

In Dindigul district Malaiyadivaram Sri Sinivasa perumal temple has have a Navagraha temple from 2006. Like this Renganathapuram Temple also Usually Navagraha sannathi has Bairava shrine. In Vaishnava temples this Bairava cult it is a later addition. Bairava worship is a predominant one in saiva temples.<sup>24</sup> Thadikombu, Reddiyarchathram kathir narasinga perumal, Ammainayakanur kathali narasinga perumal temples have Bairava shirne. In the north – east side of premises. These temples Navagraha shrine not situated in the temples But Bairava idols are worshiped in as sornaagasana Bairavar.<sup>25</sup> Thiru venkadanathar temple in Krishnapuram situated in near Thirunelveli. This temple was constructed in the period of Krishnappa Nayak of Madurai in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This temple has the unique iconography form of lord Venkatesa or srinivasa as situated in Thirumalai and christien as Thiruvengatanathar. This is the first temple to installed the Thiruvenkadanathar temple with broad Namam on the as a replica of the face venkadachalpathi in Thirupathi.<sup>26</sup>

The latest Thirupathi Venkatesa perumal statue installed is in Chinnalapatti, Dindigul district from 2016. That god name is kalyana venkatesa perumal.<sup>27</sup> The Nayaks were Vaishnavite and extended their patronage to their religion.<sup>28</sup>

The Vaikuntha perumal temple in Kanchi built by Nandivarman Pallavamalla (AD 731-796) and dedicated to vishnu is another pallava structure of the variety facing west and built in sandstone with an admixture of granite in the top and bottom courses of its Adhithana.<sup>29</sup>

Aravindalosan temple in tholaivili mangalam, Nintra nimbi temple in Thirukurugudi, Kallalagar temple in Madurai, Vadabathra sai temple in Srivilliputhur, Andal temple in Srivilliputhur, Sathyagiriyam temple in Thirumeyyam, Visayasana perumal temple in Varagunamangai, Kaishinavedan temple in Thirupuliyankudi, Uragamellanaiyan temple in Thirukottiyur, soundraraja perumal temple in thadikombu in Dindigul, Thiruvenkadanathan temple in Krishnapuram, Magaranedukulaikathan temple in Thenthiruperai, Kalyana nathar perumal in Thirulullani, cuddalagar temple in Madurai, Kalamegaperumal temple in Thirumogur, Vaikunthanathar temple in srivaikuntham, Aathinathar temple in Alwar Thirunagari, Nintranarayana perumal in Thiruthangal are very familiar temples in Pandya country. These temples are constructed and consecrated by various rulers and various periods in Pandya country. <sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

Saivism and Vaishnavism flourishing in the country. Buddhism and Jainism were fast losing their ground. The Vaishnava Alwars like Thirumangai Alwar and Thirumalisai Alwar flourished during this period. Every temple saved as a center of religious learning. The famous Kailasanathar temple at Kanchi was the meeting place of great scholars. In the Chola kings in general followed a policy of religious tolerance. The period abounded in Nayanmars and Alwars. Kulotunga II also showed his intolerance towards Vishnu in the great temple of Chidambaram.

The country of the Pandyas, Pandiya mandala was described as Pandiyan mediterrances in the periplus and Modura Regica pandyan by Ptolemy. Vaishnavism had also witnessed steeping rise of flourishing in South India during the 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The fact that the religious faction is still absolutely espoused, especially in Tamilnadu, owes much to the 12 Alwars, saints who had distributed Vaishnavism to the common people with their devotional hymans. In comparatively later centuries, Vaishnava practices improved in popularity due to the Pandya country. Religious tolerance as well as sharp theism had both a fulfillment in the metaphysical



justification of religious dogmas. In fact Sankara and Ramanuja of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries provided the metaphysical justification for the Hindu religious dogmas thereby weaning sentiment from religion and providing logical doctrines instead. The total effect of the religious exertion of the mean of God and the teaching of the Acharyas amounted to the little more than ridding society of its cruder, wilder and bloodier religious practices and attracting them to the temple and agamic form of worship. The growth of temples and matts and their manifold services to the education were of abiding value.

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