

**ARTICLE FOR THE JOURNAL : JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCE**

**TITLE OF THE ARTICLE : SRI NINRA NARAYANA PERUMAL
TEMPLE: AN EPITOME OF LEGENDARY
INSCRIPTONS AND ENGRAVINGS**

NAME OF THE AUTHOR : Dr.P.MALARVIZHI

**INSTITUTION ADDRESS : ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN HISTORY
V.V.VANNIAPERUMAL COLLEGE FOR
WOMEN,
VIRUDHUNAGAR – 626 001.**

**COMMUNICATION ADDRESS: 5/256-1, SRI RAM THEATRE ROAD,
ALLAMPATTI,
VIRUDHUNAGAR-626 001.**

MOBILE NUMBER : 94875 07758

**SRI NINRA NARAYANA PERUMAL TEMPLE: AN EPITOME OF LEGENDARY
INSCRIPTONS AND ENGRAVINGS**

**Dr.P.Malarvizhi, M.A.,M.Phil.,Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of History,
V.V.Vanniaperumal College for Women,
Virudhunagar.**

ABSTRACT

Sri Ninra Narayana Perumal Temple located on the Thangala Malai, a small hillock in Thiruthangal. This temple encloses inscriptions on the walls of the various mandapas. 7th and 8th centuries, inscriptions of Pandya period are in Grantha and Tamil scripts. The inscriptions found on the walls of Ninra Narayana Perumal Temple of Thiruthangal catalogue various phases in the construction of the temple. Women enjoy all privileges during Pandya period like owning lands, well, villages and having legal rights to own family property. Womens contributed Metal images of god and goddesses, donated land for the maintenance of the land and donated sheeps to the temple. Besides donating for the temple, the kings and lords also endow lands for the welfare of the temple priests and servants. Vaikasi Visakam, Aavani purappadu and Amavasi were celebrated with glory during Pandya period. The inscriptions of the temple reveal that taxes were levied for land during Pandya period. This temple encloses numerous inscriptions on the walls of the various mandapas like ardha mandapa and maha mandapa. These inscriptions reveal the political, social, religious and cultural contributions of the Pandya, Chera and Chola rulers.

SRI NINRA NARAYANA PERUMAL TEMPLE: AN EPITOME OF LEGENDARY INSCRIPTONS AND ENGRAVINGS

**Dr.P.Malarvizhi, M.A.,M.Phil.,Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of History,
V.V.Vanniaperumal College for Women,
Virudhunagar.**

INTRODUCTION

Temples form the cultural centres of India. They are living monuments of devotion of the votaries of the Bhakti cult in Tamil Nadu. The most noticeable contribution to Tamil Nadu Temple architecture was made by the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Vijayanagar rulers and the Nayakas. Ever since, people of the Tamil Nadu are known to be the best Temple builders in India. The earliest temples were built using brick and mortar. Up till 700 AD, temples were replicated out of caves. The Pallava Kings were the first known dynasty to have given great priority to construction of temples. They also started and perfected the art of constructing temples of stone. The Cholas (900 – 1250 AD) have a number of monuments to their credit. The most well known temple by Cholas that still stands today is the Brihadeeswarar Temple on Tanjavur. The high wall enclosures, gigantic towers and magnificent gateway arches were all the contribution of Pandya Dynasty and the carved pillars are the addition of Vijayanagar Dynastyⁱ

Through all these Tamil Hindu rulers, Hinduism flourished in Tamil Nadu. Besides, the Vaishnavite saints called Alvars and the Shaivite saints called Nayanmars, Spearheaded Hinduism through the Bhakti movement in the Tamil country in 5th 7th centuries ADⁱⁱ. For the Vaishnavites, the Lord is Narayana and to the Shaivites, Shiva is the Lord. In the earlier stages of the Bhakti movement, Shaivism was dominant, while in the later stages Vaishnavism took overⁱⁱⁱ.

Many Pandyan kings were staunch Vaishnavites. This leads to the erection and maintenance of many Vaishnavite temples by the Pandyas in and around their capital city, Madurai^{iv} Jatavarman Sundara Pandyan gave very significant contributions to Srirangam temple. He also renovated the golden vimana of the same temple and gave a famous thulabhara^v. There were many other kings of Pandyan lineage who patronized Vaishnavism and built many Vaishnavite temples in south Tamil Nadu like Thirumeninathar Temple of Tiruchuzhiyal, Kalainathaswamy Temple of Pallimadam, Vadapatrasaye Temple of Srivilliputtur and Ninra Narayana Perumal Temple of Thiruthangal.

Thiruthangal, a town of antiquity, in the Sivakasi Taluk of Virudhunagar District is a place of historical importance even during the ancient period. The famous temple of this town is Sri Ninra Narayana Perumal Temple located on the Thangala Malai, a small hillock. This temple encloses numerous inscriptions on the walls of the various mandapas like ardha mandapa and maha mandapa. These inscriptions reveal the political, social, religious and cultural contributions of the Pandya, Chera and Chola rulers.

INSCRIPTIONS

Inscriptions found in the temple are in Vatteluthu, Grantha and Tamil scripts. Vatteluthu was the prevalent script in the Chola country. This script was prevalent in the 7th and 8th centuries. Inscriptions of Pandya period are in Grantha and Tamil scripts. Grantha and Tamil scripts were the latter form of Vatteluthu.

There are 40 inscriptions in Sri Ninra Narayana Perumal Temple dated to the reign of Varaguna I (806 AD), Parantaka Chola I, Kulottunga Chola I (1070-1120 AD), Jatavarman Srivallabha, Jatavarman Kulasekara I, Maravarman Sundara Pandya I (13th century AD) and Kulasekara Pandya I^{vi}. The regnal years cited in the inscriptions are also very valuable. One inscription refers to Varaguna Pandya I in the regnal era 38. The converted Christian era is 806 AD. The ninth regnal year of Kulasekhara Pandya is converted as 1119 AD.

MAINTENANCE OF THE TEMPLE

The inscriptions found on the walls of Ninra Narayana Perumal Temple of Thiruthangal catalogue various phases in the construction of the temple as well as the donations made by devotees. The earliest epigraph is a vatteluthu inscription from the time of Varaguna Pandya I (AD 806). It records the gift of sheep by Kilavan of Alarru Nadu for a perpetual lamp for the temple. This inscription is found on the floor of the ardha mandapa of Perumal sanctum^{vii}.

An inscription on the southern wall of the mahamandapa of the temple records the erection of stone-made garbhagraha, arthamandapa and mahamandapa of this temple during 13th century by Sundara Pandya^{viii}. The King carried out the works of construction by directing his minister by name Kurugula Tharayan. Another inscription in the same wall of the temple indicates the donations made by the Pandya king Konerinmai Kondan for the daily pujas especially for the sirukala sandhi puja of the temple^x. This inscription also showed the religious tolerance of the people and the king. The king donated land both for the Shavite (Karunellinatha Swamy) and Vaishnavite (Sri Ninra Narayana Perumal) temple for the town.

Special pujas were instituted in the name of Sundara Pandyan sandhi and Gurukulattarayan sandhi. Sundara Pandyan sandhi was created in the name of Pandya King Sundara Pandyan. For this sandhi, a special village by name Thennvan Sitrur was created by bifurcating a village called Anaiyur^x. Gurukulattarayan sandhi is revealed from an inscription inscribed on the southern wall of the mahamandapam of the temple during the period of Jadavarman Kulasekara Pandya. Gurukulattarayan's donated land was in Anaiyur^{xi}.

Inscription on the western wall of the first prakara reveals the land endowed by Thirumadamudaiyan, who hailed from Thiruvalundhur, located from in Cholamandalam, for the maintenance of a perpetual lamp in the temple^{xii}. Another inscription in the western wall indicates that Purushoththaman of Kundinya Kotram, an inhabitant of Thiruthangal, donated land and well for the maintenance of the temple. The land and well endowed were located in Kudiveli, which was a southern hamlet of Thiruthangal^{xiii}. The land in Sadayan Kurichi was donated to the temple^{xiv}. An inhabitant of Thiruthangal by name Sankara Narayanan had donated land and a well for the perpetual lamp of the temple^{xv}. This inscription belongs to Sadavarman Kulasekaran period.

An inscription on the northern wall of the arthamandapa records the construction of 'Thiruvarangadevan Thirumandapam' in the western and northern portions of the prakara by Kulasekara Pandya. He had also endowed lands for the daily pujas of the deity Narasimhar^{xvi}. Another inscription depicts the endowment of

land by Thirumalaialwan for the perpetual lamp of the temple^{xvii}. An inscription of Sri Vallabha period records the gift of land by the king for the expenses of the temple^{xviii}.

An inscription found on the paramapatha vasal of the shrine indicates that the paramapatha vasal was constructed by Thirusitrambalappiriyar of Anandur^{xix}. An inscription found on the door of sanctum of Renganathar inscribes the name of the carpenter who made the same door in 18th century^{xx}.

An inscription in Vatteluttu script on a pillar lying in the south verandah of the first prakara of the temple records a gift of 31 sheep for a perpetual lamp in the temple by Tiruvengadanilai Perumanadigal at Tiruthangal a devadana village by Devagudi Kalan Alaiyan Korran-Kilavan of Kadanur in Malli-nadu agreed to maintain the gift^{xxi}. On the same wall- some stones are lost in the middle. This seems to consist of two records one in continuation of the other, the second one being dated in the 20th year of the king. They both register gifts of 90 sheep for burning 2 perpetual lamps in the temple, each with an ulakku of ghee supplied daily^{xxii}. These inscriptions infer that provision for the maintenance of perpetual lamp in a temple was a common practice of earning religious merit for oneself or of exploiting an offence.

Endowment by women

Women enjoy all privileges during Pandya period. They own lands, well and villages. They have legal rights to own family property. So they endow lands for the perpetual lamp for the temple. Metal images of the god and the goddess (utsavamurti) were installed by Sadagopan Tirumangayandal, wife of Kalingarayan, an official under Jatavarman Kulasekara Deva^{xxiii}. Lands were also donated by her to meet out the day-to-day expenses of the worship of God and Goddess^{xxiv}. She had also donated land for the maintenance of the tank(Sengalunir Thiruppallithamam)^{xxv}. Now the tank has been called as Sengulam. Two ladies by name Atkondi, wife of Thiruvaranagadevan and Thirumakal, wife of Suryanarayanan of Kadayavarman Kulasekara Pandya period donated 25 sheep to the temple in 13th century AD^{xxvi}. Kottra Nachiyar, wife of Narayanan had endowed 50 sheep for the perpetual lamp of the temple^{xxvii}. For the 'Sandhya deepam' of the Lord, Uyyavanthala Devi, wife of Ponnalikeyan of Srivanavan Mahadevi Chaturvedimangalam, a brahmadeva of Vembu nadu had donated 13 sheep^{xxviii}. All these inscriptions are seen on the western wall of the first prakara of the temple.

GIFT OF LAND BY SABHA

Besides an individual's gift, the sabha, an administrative unit of the village, also donates land to the temple. An inscription on the north side of the Perumal shrine indicates the endowment of land to the temple by a sabha of Prakrama Chaturvedimangalam^{xxix}. The inscription was recorded in the period of Kulasekhara Pandya.

FESTIVALS

The inscriptions of the temple reveal the festivals celebrated in the temple during Pandya rule. Vaikasi Visakam, Aavani purappadu and amavasi were celebrated with glory. Lands were granted during the Later Sundara Pandya rule for conducting puja on Vaikasi Visakam^{xxx} and Avani Purappadu. Two brothers namely Thiruvaranagadevan and Kundreduttan had donated lands Maravarman Sundara Pandya period for Vaikasi Visakam^{xxxi}. They donated land for the preparation of a naivedya with mango and milk (Palmangayamudhu) on a Visakam day as per the

inscription on the eastern wall of the mahamandapa of the shrine^{xxxii}. For the Aavani purappadu, the land was endowed by Aadhiraiyan Kuneruthuthan Sri Vallaban^{xxxiii}. During the Aavani purappadu, special ghee abhishekam (Neyyadal) was made to the deity. An inscription inscribed on the western wall of the first prakara of the temple records the land donated by Kulotthunga Chola (1070-1120 AD) to meet out the expenses that occur while the God was taken out in procession on Amavasai^{xxxiv}.

ENTERTAINMENT

Religious temples are the entertainment places of earlier Tamils. Reciting and hearing epics and purans are their major entertainment activities. So the Tamil epics are recited in the temple every day. An inscription in the northern wall of the arthamandapa of the temple records that for the daily recitation of Ramayana inside the temple premise, Thiruvarangadevan and Kundreduttan had donated lands^{xxxv}.

LOCATION OF THIRUTHANGAL

The inscriptions of the temple also bring out the history of the town. As per the political geography noticed from the inscriptions, Thiruthangal was a Devadhana Brahmadheyam in Karunilakkudinadu, in Madhuraoadhaya valanadu of Sri Pandi Nadu. The village was a brahmadeya settlement administered by a Brahmin sabha called Mulaparushaiyar^{xxxvi}. The irrigation tanks of the village were called Devamdravallabha Pereri and Ninranarayana Pereri^{xxxvii}.

FORMATION OF VILLAGES

The inscriptions of Sri Ninra Narayana Perumal temple records the creation of villages and administration of villages by the rulers. In the Panaiyur region, a helmet to the north east of Thiruthangal, a brahmadeya, Kulasekara chaturvedimangalam, was created for 54 brahmins well versed in the Vedas^{xxxviii}. The inscriptions seen on the lower portion of the northern wall of the temple recorded this information.

The formation of a chaturvedimangalam by name 'Kulasekara Chaturvedimangalam' after the name of the ruler is recorded in the inscription which is found on the northern wall of the ardha mandapa of Perumal Shrine. This inscription is found to be dated back to the period of Pandya king Kulasekara Pandya(1190-1217 AD)^{xxxix}. Another village by name 'Pukalokakandanallur' was formed including certain lands that belonged to Thiruppanaiyur, Porkudi, Pudukkulam, Irunchoranattuk Kumaramangalam, Sendamangalam^{xl}. For the donation of land to the temple, a village by name Thennavan Sitrur was created during Sundara Pandya period^{xli}.

SOCIAL LIFE

The inscriptions of the Ninra Narayana Perumal temple depict the style of living of the people of Pandyas period. Besides donating for the temple, the kings and lords also endow lands for the welfare of the temple priests and servants. The kings donated land for the servants of the temple. This is revealed through an inscription on the southern wall of the ardha mandapa of the temple. It records the gift of land as Madappuram, near Devendravallabha Pereri and Sreedevi canal for the temple priests and servants by the Later Pandya, Sundara Pandya^{xlii}.

The inscriptions of the temple reveal that taxes were levied for land during Pandya period^{xliii}. An inscription inscribed on the eastern wall of the mahamandapa of the temple records the arrangements made for the payment of taxes like Kasukadamai and Nerkadamai collected by the Mulaparushaiyar, the Brahmin sabha

that administered Thiruthangal to the Srivaishnavas and Pandaris of the temple for the purpose of meeting out the day to day puja expenses of the temple. This inscription was engraved during the period of Srivallabhan Pandya^{xliv}. But the gifted lands and the lands belonging to the temple were exempted from tax levitation. An inscription on the southern portion of the ardha mandapa records that Anaiyur alias Thennavan Sitrur, located in Karunilakkudi Nadu was a devadana iraiyili(lands endowed for the temple rendered free from land-dues) of this temple^{xlv}.

An inscription on the adhithana of Perumal sanctum reveals the musical instruments of 17th century.

UNIT FOR MEASURING LAND

Inscriptions found on the western wall of the first prakara of the temple depicts that 'kandrakarparaikol' was used for measuring land under Chola and Pandya rule. Ma was an unit used for measuring land^{xlvi}.

FORMATION OF ARAKATTALAI

For the renovation work of ardha mandapa of Perumal sanctum, Manavala Mamunigal sannidhi, Garuda sannidhi and ardha mandapa of Renganathar sanctum, an arakattalai was formed with 7 members by Ramanujadas of Sengamala Natchiyarpuram. This inscription belongs to 20th century.

CONCLUSION

Thus the inscriptions of Sri Ninra Narayana Perumal Temple of Thiruthangal reveal valuable information about the social and religious life of the Tamils and their generosity towards the priests and workers of the temple. The inscriptions also inscribe about the administration of villages through sabha by the rulers. The political division of land like brahamadeya,nadu and chaturvedimangalam for the efficient administration is also traced from these inscriptions. The legal rights of women of owning and endowing lan are traced through these inscriptions. As come of the inscriptions of the temple are incomplete and in damaged condition, it is difficult to trace out the complete history of the temple. Thus the temple after crossing more than .12 centuries stands like ever youth Vishnu in Thiruthangal. So, the Government can take necessary steps to maintain the sanitary condition of the place. Hence this town could be developed into a nationwide pilgrim as well as tourist centre.

ⁱ Ganga Ram Garg, Encyclopaedia of the Hindu World, Vol.1, New Delhi, 1992, p.65.

ⁱⁱ Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, A History of India, New York, 1986, p.143.

ⁱⁱⁱ Padmaja, T., Temples of Krishna in south India : History, Art and Traditions in Tamilnadu, New Delhi, 2002, p.44

^{iv} Ibid., p.51.

^v Upinder Singh, A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century, New Delhi, 2008, P.560.

^{vi} Vedachalam, V., Sethuraman, G. and Madhuca Krishnan, op.cit.,68.

^{vii} Ibid., 554/1922

^{viii} ARE. 554/1922.

^{ix} ARE. 550/1922

^x ARE. 549,554/1922

^{xi} ARE. 548/1922

^{xii} ARE. 560/1922.

- xiii ARE. 561/1922.
- xiv ARE. 566/1922.
- xv ARE. 563/1922.
- xvi ARE. 553/1922.
- xvii ARE. 570/1922
- xviii ARE. 555/1922
- xix ARE. 564,565/1922.
- xx ARE. 580/1922.
- xxi ARE. 557/1922.

- xxii ARE. 564/1922.
- xxiii ARE. 564/1922.
- xxiv ARE. 562/1922.
- xxv ARE. 559/1922
- xxvi ARE. 558/1922
- xxvii . ARE. 567/1922.
- xxviii . ARE. 569/1922.
- xxix ARE. 545/1922.
- xxx ARE. 556,564/1922.
- xxxi ARE.546/1922.
- xxxii ARE. 556/1922.
- xxxiii ARE. 546/1922.
- xxxiv ARE. 565/1922.
- xxxv ARE. 546/1922.
- xxxvi ARE. 542,556/1922.
- xxxvii ARE. 545,556/1922.
- xxxviii ARE. 544/1922
- xxxix ARE. 543/1922.
- xl ARE. 544/1922
- xli ARE.549,554/1922.
- xlii ARE. 547/1922.
- xliii ARE 568/1922.
- xliv ARE 555/1922.
- xlv ARE. 542/1922
- xlvi ARE. 560,561,564/1922.