



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

History

GLIMPSES OF SRI VANAMAMALAI PERUMAL TEMPLE NANGUNERI IN TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

KEY WORDS: Vaishnava Sthala, Sri Vanamalai Temple, Srivanamamalai Mutt

S. KALYANI

Ph.D Research Scholar Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu

ABSTRACT

An attempt is made in this article to delineate the history of Sri Vanamalai Perumal Temple in Nanguneri at Tirunelveli District of TamilNadu. Nanguneri has one of the famous temple dedicated to Lord Vanamamalai and Goddesses Sri Devi and Bhuma Devi. The presence of Sri Vanamamalai temple in Nanguneri testify the antiquity of Vaishnavism a sect of Hinduism. Sri Vanamamalai temple of Nanguneri has made unique contribution in constructing the religious and social life of the past and present people. The temple also supply the various valuable inscriptions. Which serve as authentic evidences to know about the history of the Pandyas.

Introduction

Nanguneri has one of the famous temple dedicated to Lord Vanamamalai and Goddesses Sri Devi and Bhuma Devi. The presence of Sri Vanamamalai temple in Nanguneri testify the antiquity of Vaishnavism a sect of Hinduism. Sri Vanamamalai temple of Nanguneri has made unique contribution in constructing the religious and social life of the past and present people. The temple also supply the various valuable inscriptions. Which serve as authentic evidences to know about the history of the Pandyas. Nanguneri is one of the 108 Vaishnava Sthala sung in praise of Vishnu by Alwars and is also one of the eight Swayamyaktha places. The images at Swayamuyaktha places are said to have been brought about at the instance of the Lord himself. This place is considered as Bhoolokavaikundam or the even on earth.

Sri Vanamalai Temple – Nanguneri is the ninety in the series of the 108 Divyadesas dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Nanguneri is located thirty Kilometers (30) South of Tirunelveli lying on the Tirunelveli-Kanyakumari road as well as on the Northern bank of Namibiyaru river. Nanguneri Town the taluk head quarters is also known as Sri Varamangala Nagar, Sri Varamangalam and Sri Purushamangai. In later days it was also called as Thothathri Vanamalai and Nanguneri. It is considered to be the father in laws place of Lord Vishnu. This place was ruled by the Pandya King Nedum Chadiyar Paranthagan (765 A.D. – 796 A.D.) Who was also known as Srivaran. Hence the name of this town was called by the name Sri Varamangalam. The Vanamamalai perumal temple is dedicated to Lord, Thothadri and is celebrated seat of Vaishnavism glorified by Nammalwar of the seventh century A.D. This temple is under the maintenance and control of Srivanamamalai Mutt. Thotha means removal of Sins and Athri means mountain. This mountain is said to have risen from the bed of the holy tank Pankaja Pushkarani. Similarly the name Nanguneri means Nan-four gumbend – Neri-tank.

The architecture in this temple is a mixture of both Pandya and Kerala styles. This temple is situated in an area of about 1500 square feet. According to mythology. It was construct by the celestial architect at the instance of Lord Vishnu himself. The temple was improved by the Pandya and Nayaks King and later by the successive heads of Vanamamalai Mutt. The temple is famous for superstructure, the 200 feet Ornamental gopuram soann high at the main entrance. It is a very attractive albeit having few images. It consists of miniature columns beautifully decorated one above the other in the vertical order. This magic was done with the help of brick and mortar. Very big walls surround the temple on all the four sides making it a picture framed in stones.

The Presiding deity of Lord Thothadri is in the sitting posture on the couch and under the canopy of Adishesha with consorts Sri Devi and Bhudevi and the divine dames les Urvasi and Thilothama. The gingery oil used in the Abishegam ceremonies of this image is said to possess miraculous healing power. This Sacred oil is considered to be a divine cure for skin ailments and also for leprosy. This oil is collected in ennaikinar oil well situated on the north east corner of this temple. This has been alluded to sage Augusta in his Tamil

Book on medicine over 2000 years ago.

On the Southern side the statue of Lord Rama Keeping his arm on the shoulders of Sukreeva and this posture shows the affection of Rama to Sukreeva in a very realistic way. Apart from this the grace and elegant dancing girl, the stone chain hanging in a corner from the roof and a stone ball rolling inside the mouth of a seated lion are the master pieces exhibiting the sculptures skill. There are about half a dozen sub-temples inside this main temple particularly for the Goddess Sri Varamangai Thayer, Andal, Lakshimi Narayana, Lakshimivaraha, Venugopala, ten in coronations of the Lord. Alwars and saints Ramanuja and Manavalamamuni. Nammalwar is said to have merged under the holy feet of this deity. The main attraction here is the life size Kannan on the Northern wing. The first madapa inside the temple is Jeyanthi mandapa said to be build by Javanthi Nayak. A little to the interior Utsavamurthis Daivanayaga Perumal with Uba Yanachiar, Sivarmangi Nachiar present dharshan. Veerapa Nayak Mandapa is situated on the Northern side of it on the way to oil well. Regular Poojas are conducted in the temple by hereditary Brahmin Priests. The temple is having many Vahanas made of gold and Silver. The Golden chariot is a beautiful piece of art portraying the wonderful work man ship. Of the different festivals celebrated here annual festival held during the Tamil months of Ponguni and Chitirai deserve special mention and more than 20,000 persons from different parts of the country are said to attend these festivals.

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