



**ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER**

**History**

**TEMPLES AROUND TENKASI IN TAMILNADU, INDIA**

**KEY WORDS:** Tenkasi, Katrali, Temple, Uthsavam.

**G. Chitra Parvathy**

Research Scholar, Department of History, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, TamilNadu.

**ABSTRACT**

The town Tenkasi was developed at the time of Later Pandiyas. King Parakirama Pandiyar built the huge Kasi Viswanathar Temple at Tenkasi. It was katrali work. After that, many temples were built in and around Tenkasi. Kulasekaranathar temple and Chithampareswarar temple are the other temples for Lord Siva and Porunthinintra Perumal temple and Vinnagara Perumal temple are the temples for Lord Vishnu in Tenkasi. Because of the locality, near the Western Ghats and the river Chitharu, the people lead a luxurious life. Kings, Zamindars and Land Lords built many temples like Kulathur Iyyanar Temple, Aywar Raja temple, Tirumalai Kumara swamy temple, Dhakshnamoorthi temple, Mathunatha Swamy temple, Bala subramaniya Swamy temple, Azhahiya Manawala Perumal temple and Jamathakaniswarar temple around Tenkasi.

**INTRODUCTION**

The history of TamilNadu in India has many things to contribute to religion, art, culture and national wealth. Innumerable sacred and holy temples have been decorating the spiritual land of the Tamils. Most of the temples contain valuable inscriptions that serve as the most authentic sources for the reconstruction of the ancient history of the land. The Tenkasi Kasi Viswanathar Temple in the Tirunelveli District is one of the few living South Indian temples with a rich past.

Tirunelveli district inclusive of Tenkasi is highly rich in Archaeological remains. Inscriptions, temples, cave temples and paintings found in various parts of the district. Tenkasi is the largest town in Tirunelveli district. Tenkasi is situated at the foot of the Western Ghats and near the spa of Southern India, the Courtallam falls. The countable numbers of falls are very big attraction for the tourists and pilgrims.

Tenkasi is very important place for the pilgrims, especially of Lord Ayyappa in Sabarimala, because Tenkasi is the entrance of the Kerala State. Kasi Viswanathar temple in Tenkasi, Courtallanathar temple in Courtallam, Tiruvilanchi Kumaran temple in Elanchi, Porunthi Nintra Perumal temple, Opanai Pillaiyar temple and the three Mutharamman temples at the west, centre and east of the town Tenkasi are the famous temples in and around Tenkasi. These temples are called 'katrali' means built by stone. Here we are going to see about some temples in and around Tenkasi.

**Kulathur Iyyanar Temple**

Kulathur Iyyanar Temple is situated in the midst of many mosques. This temple is now administrated by the local smith community people. There is a story behind this temple.

The Arabian Saint Syed Sulaiman Peer Jatha had a hindu man servant as his attendant. This servant followed the saint very devotedly and fulfilled his all necessities and personal wants. So the saint also was very kind towards his servant. This servant wanted a temple for his personal worship. So the saint made arrangements for building this temple. The servant also was very much pleased to have this temple for his personal worship. After the demise of the Master and Servant there was no one to look after the temple. So the surrounding smith community took it in their hands and worship and celebrate the celebrations with more care throughout the year<sup>1</sup>.

**Aywar Raja temple**

Aywar Raja is the name connected with the kings who ruled Tenkasi at early time. Now there is a village near Pavoora chathiram in the name of Pancha Pandiyoor. There is one small Aywar Raja temple near the village Vinai Theertha Nadar Patti. This is almost two kms. south of above said Pavoora Chathiram. People who are living in these two places now, are the offspring of the people who lived in the Aywar Raja temple street. It is to be understood that Aywar Raja Temple in Tenkasi and Agastheeswaram, were built in remembrance of the defeat of those Rajas in the battle of Kayathar

and Valliyoor. The Tenkasi AywarRaja temple was changed into a Murugan temple by the latter people who settled in that street after the farmer's exit.<sup>2</sup>

**Ponpozhi Tirumalai Kumaraswamy Temple**

This temple is on the top of a hill. There are 626 steps to reach the temple at the top. A priest namely Poovan Pattar got an order of Lord Muruga in his dream to build a temple using the idol earthed at Kottaitthiradu. He informed the King of Pandala about the dream and the king built the temple. An old lady Sivakami Ammayar helped to bring the stone pillars to the top of the hill.

The shrine of Lord Vinayaka is at the bottom of the hill and the Mother Tirumalai Kali graces at the top of the hill. The presiding deity Lord Muruga is known as Tirumalai Kumara swamy, and also known as Mookaiya. When digging at Kottaitthiradu for the idol, the nose of the idol was little damaged and for that reason Lord Muruga called Mookaiya. For this very same reason people living around here bore the nose of their children even for boys. Vaikasi Visagam festival is very famous here.<sup>3</sup>

**Puzhiyarai Dhakshna Moorthi** There is a temple for Lord Dhakshnamoorthi at a village Puzhiyarai. It is just a short distance away from Shenkottai town. People, especially students throng here to worship this Moorthi on Thursdays. Ten days Thirukalyana vizha uthsavam will be celebrated every year, starting from the Uthiram star day of the Tamil month Thai. Guru Peyarchi vizha is very famous here. Lot of people will gather here in that day.<sup>4</sup>

**Elathur Mathunatha Swamy**

Mathunatha Swamy temple is situated in Elathur. It was constructed and consecrated on the same day of the first Kumbabishegam day of Kasi Viswanathar Temple. This village is situated near the river Anuman nathi. The Puranams says when Rama going for Lanka with Lakshmana and Vanara Sena, Anuman made this river for Rama's thirsty. Nowadays people throng here to worship and offer offering to Bahavan Sani, who is installed in a separate sannathi so as to people come around this sannathi.<sup>5</sup>

**Ayikudi Balasubramaniya Swamy**

Ayikudi is situated five Kms. from Tenkasi on the north direction. Lord Bala subramaniya Swamy temple is very fame in this area. Kanda Sasti Vizha is very special here. At the event of Soora samkaram the idol of Lord Bala subramaniya accompanied a very special Golden Vel with precious emerald stone surrounded by lot of diamonds. People throng here to worship for want of baby.<sup>6</sup>

**Azhahiya Manawala Perumal temple**

This temple is very near to Shenkottai bus stand. Lord Vishnu is called Azhahiya Manawala Perumal here. Uthiram day of the month Aadi, the Car festival is celebrated. An inscription in Malayalam laid here indicates that this temple is built in the Malayalam year 1064 (1889 A.D.). King Moolam thirunal, the king of Travancore built this temple.<sup>7</sup>

### Kulasekara Natha Swamy temple

This temple is also in the midst of Shenkottai town. This temple is named after the Pandyan king Kulasekara Pandyan. The Amman is called Padikasu Aruliya Devi. The sculptures on the stone pillars of the Muga Mandapam are very lovely and famous.<sup>8</sup>

### Jamathakaniswarar temple

This temple is in the village Killankadu two kms. away from Tenkasi. A village story relates this Lord Jamathakaniswarar with Munivar Jamathakani, the father of Parasurama and a Kali temple is also here in this village, where Kali is his mother Renuga Devi. The Muga Mandapam in this temple is very peculiar. The stone ceiling of this Mandapam is in the structure of wooden like beams and tiles like roof but all in stone. *Bhramothsavam* in Pankuni, *Pari Vettai* in Purattasi and Thai, *Thirukkalyanam* in Ayepasi and *Sivarathri* are the festivals celebrated in this temple.<sup>9</sup>

### Srimoolanathar temple

This temple is in the bank of Anuman River at the village Sambavar Vadakarai fifteen kms from Tenkasi on the road Tenkasi-Surandai. Here Lord Siva is called Srimoolanathar and Goddess is called Maduravani. *Sathiyam Thampuran* who is a saint in a separate sannathi in this temple. When the King affected by a *Bhramakathi dhosham*, he worship the Lord Srimoolanathar. But Srimoolanathar comes in the dream of the King and asked him to worship *Sathiyam Thampuran* to save him from his *dhosham*. The King worshiped *Sathiyam Thampuran* and *Thampuran* saved him from the *dhosham*. The first pooja will be given to this *Sathiyam Thampuran* at the evening of the day before the first day of the festival.<sup>10</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Tenkasi and its surroundings have many temples. They are very well known for their architecture and sculpture works. And all this temples have their own traditions and customs. It reveals the culture and wealth of the people lived there. A forest can be considered wealthy when there the elephants live. Likewise a region is wealthy if there is a temple. But here in Tenkasi they have many temples around here. Certainly the people lived here lead a very wealthy life.

### REFERENCE

1. M. Krishnan, Kulathur Iyannar Koil Vilzha Malar Small Pamphlet (Translated in Tamil), Tenkasi, 2008, pp, 1-2
2. S. Raman, Aywar Raja Koil Sirappu Vilza Malar, (Translated in Tamil), Pavoor Chathiram, 2003, pp. 3-4
3. M. Balan, Tirumalai Kumaran Temple vizha Malar (Translated from Tamil), Tenkasi, 2004, p. 5
4. Dr.A.K.Perumal, Tirukoikal Vazhikatti Kanyakumari District (Translated from Tamil), Nagerkoil, 2015, p.252.
5. D. Moorthy, Mathunatha Swamy Temple Vizha Malar (Translated from Tamil), Tenkasi, 2015, pp. 2-3.
6. H. Sakthivel, Ayikudi Bala subramaniya Swamy Temple Tirukoil Veliyeedu, Tenkasi, 2005, pp. 3-5.
7. Inscriptions on wall in Azhahiya Manawala Perumal Temple, Malayalam year 1064, by King Moolam Thirunal.
8. Inscriptions on wall in Kulasekara Natha Swamy Temple 1890 A.D, by Pandian King Kulasekara Pandian.
9. S.Ganapathi Raman, Kasiviswanatha Tirukovil Sthalavaralaru, Thirukoil Veliyeedu, Tenkasi, 2003, p. 38.
10. R. Durai, Srimoolanathar Temple Sthalavaralaru, Tirukoil Veliyeedu, Tenkasi, 2005, pp. 2-3.