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History

GENESIS OF SRI ADINATHA ALVAR TEMPLE - ALVARTHIRUNAGARI

KEY WORDS: Adinatha alvar, Nammalvar, Navathiruppathi, Madurakavigal

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to describes the origin of Sri Adinatha Alvar temple at Alvarthirunagari. Alvarthirunagari is twenty miles east of Tirunelveli and seventeen miles west of Tiruchendur in Thoothukudi district of Tamil Nadu. AlvarThirunagari was a centre for Vaishnava tradition. Manavalamemunigal who praised Nammalvar was born at Sikkal Kidaram near Alvarthirunagari. Adinatha Alvar temple is one of the largest temples in Thoothukudi District. The Adinatha Alvar temple is situated in the centre of Alvarthirunagari. The Adinatha alvar temple was constructed in the early period.

Introduction :

Alvar Tirunagari is otherwise known as Tirukurugur. Tirukurugur was the capital city of Thiruvalluvalanadu. In the Thiruvalluvalanadu there are nine Vishnu temples known as Navathiruppathi, Alvar Tirunagari is one among the Navathiruppathis. These nine temples are situated on the banks of the Thamirabharani River.

Nammalvar got enlightenment under the Tamarind tree which grew inside the temple complex. Other Temple constructed around the Adinatha Temple are Tiruvengadamudaiyen Temple, Pillai Logacharya, Alager Temple, Desigar Temple and the Andal Temple.

Construction :

The Adinatha temple was constructed in the early period. There are some legendary accounts about the origin of the Adinatha temple. According to one legend, one day Lord Brahma went to Vaikunda, the Sacred abode of Lord Narayana and prayed to Him. Lord Vishnu accepted his prayer and said that, he had selected a place on the banks of the Thamirabharani River known as Adhisekram. Brahma was requested to go there and pray.

The Adinatha temple got much importance because the deity of Nammalvar is there only. In this temple a separate temple was constructed for Nammalvar. So Lords from Navathiruppathi came to Alvar Tirunagari on the fifth day festival of Vaikasi Thirunal. During the Sangam age the temples were built with perishable materials. After the Pallavas stone and other things were used to build the temples. In the Adinatha temple the deities of Adipiran and Thiruvengadamudaiyan are made up of a mixture of sand. This is known from the Talavaralaru. But it is not true since the deities are made of granite.

The Adinatha temple has a grand structure with lofty Mandapams through which the main entrance lead into the inner precincts. A number of paintings depicting the scenes from Ramayana are found there. But the paintings were in a dilapidated condition. Some paintings were destroyed before 1915. This Mandapa has many Pillars. There are some remarkable Pillars, 48 in Number carved out of a single granite stone.

In the Adinatha temple Varahanayanar is depicted as Jinapiran. Varahanayanar gave his darshan as Jinapiran to his followers. So they called him as Jinapiran. Temple to Varahanayanar is situated on a Mandapa in the south side Prakara. On the wall of this temple some inscriptions are found. One of the inscriptions found on the north wall of the temple was inscribed during the reign of Maravarman Sundara Pandya II. This record was issued on his fifteenth regnal year. From this record the Jinapiran Sannathi was built and the diety of Varahanavanar were installed by Ariyan Viradamudichchan alias Palla¹/₁₇₂ayar of Chakkarapani inllur in Sevirkkainadu. Pallavarayar was minister of the Pandyan King.

Yagasalai is located on the eastern side of the Second Prakara. An Inscription is found on the north wall. From this record it is known

that Malavaraipati built an artistic mandapa for the God Sthithadhivali (Nira Adhinatha in Tamil) and also called Tata-Tatasarinagri ie. Alvar Tirunagari.

Pandal Mandapam is situated adjacent to the Raja Gopuram. This Pandal Mandapa was constructed by Pandala Ramaswamy Nayakar. He started the Ceremony of Garuda Sevai in the Adhinatha temple in 1807. Lords from Navathiruppathi participated in the ceremony of Garuda Sevai.

On either side of the Pandal Mandapa some important architectural Mandapas are located. They are Kannadi Mandapa and Vahana Mandapa. At the entrance of the Kannadi Mandapa there is a small mandapam. In this Mandapa some life size statues are there. There are some musical Pillars also. Kongaiyankuradu and Kilikuradu are located in the Pandal Mandapa. Altar and Kodimara are erected in the same Mandapa. After that the second Gopuram is situated adjacent to it Garuda Mandapam, known as Garudar Sannathi is located.

Nammalvar was born in the Village called Alvar Tirunagari. He renounced the world in his thirty fifth year to practice Yoga. In this temple Nammalvar got much importance. Nammalvar Sannathi is situated sixty feet away from the Perumal Sannathi. The Vimana of Nammalvar Sannathi is higher than the other Vimanas of the Adhinatha temple.

Inscriptions :

Jadavarman Kulasekhara's (1190-1220) inscriptions are the earliest found on the walls of Nammalvar Shrine. The same King built a separate temple to Nammalvar. The deity of Nammalvar was made during the time of Madurakavi Alvar who was the disciple of Nammalvar. Nammalvar wears Makilampu Garland. His hair was decorated as a crown, His face has much brightness and signs of meditations. Madurakavi constructed the temple and installed the deity.

The deity of Ustavara (Nammalvar) was made from the Thamirabharani River water. Nammalvar wanted to go back to Srivaikunda, the sacred abode of Lord Narayana. His disciple requested him to continue to bless his disciples in the form of an idol. Nammalvar accepted his idea and instructed him to take certain quantity of Thamirabharani water. He took it in a copper vessel and boiled it. When Madurakavigal took the quantity of water prescribed by Nammalvar he felt that the water was much less. Hence he poured some more water and boiled it. From this an idol emerged. Madurakavi wanted to know about the idol. This was named as Ramanuja. Madurakavi again did the same thing and got the idol of Nammalvar.

In front of the Nammalvar Sannathi, Thirumanjana Mandapa is situated. In this Mandapa also there are some life size statues. They are statues of Karna, Arjuna, Narthaki, Hanuman, Rama with Sita, Lakshmana and others.

Within the temple walls there is a tamarind tree with seven branches. Nammalvar sat for 16 years in meditation under this

tree. Among the trees the tamarind tree gets significance among the Vaishnavas. Vaishnava temples do not have Sthalavirshas. The temple at Alvar Tirunagari may be pointed out as Vaishnava temple having a Sthalavirksham. It was held with great sanctity from the hoary past. Around the tamarind tree there is a wall. In this wall one can see the images of 108 Divya Desas. The Ustavara of the main deity (Adinatha) was known as Polinthuninrapiran. The deity of Adinatha was made in the 12th or 13th century. Some of a temple to Adinatha was also built only at the Same time by the Pandyas.

Thiruvaimozhi Pillai was teacher of Manavala Mahamunigal. He built the stone Mandapa in front of the Polinthuninra Adipiran. In this Mandapam some Pillars are there. On one of the Pillars the image Thiruvaimozhi Pillai was inscribed. He sat on the Mandapa which is situated on the north side of Perumal Sannathi and explained the meaning to Thiruvaimozhi. In this Mandapa some Sannathis are there. They are Poneintha Perumal Sannathi, Senaimudalvar Sannathi, Ramar (Rama with Sita and Lakshmana) Sannathi.

In a tall and larger temple, there is a separate building in the temple precincts dedicated to the come mother with in the Garbhagiraha (called Tayar Sannathi Nachiyar Sannathi) who is a Mula Vighraha of the God. In the Adinatha Temple, temples to his consorts are known as Kurugur Nachiyar sannathi and Adinathavalli Sannathi.

Pagal Pattu and Era Pattu Mandapams are also in this temple. These Mandapams were built during the time of the Nayaks but it was not known who built them.

There is a stone Nadasvaram in this temple. It has the length of one foot and 4 or 5 centimeters as diameter. This instrument was given to this temple, in the time of Krishnappa Nayak. The Nadasvaram is otherwise known as Mohaveena. For a long time this instrument was not used. The instrument was used when they practiced Bharatha Natyam.

The Adinatha Alvar temple is one among the biggest temples in Tirunelveli District. In the Adinatha temple there exists an incomplete Gopuram. On this Gopuram some images of the Kings are inscribed. The Gopuram is in a dilapidated condition.

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