



A DE-NOTIFIED HERITAGE TOURIST SPOT AT TRICHY- A STUDY

¹Dr.K.Lakshmi

¹Associate Professor of History
Sri Meenakshi Govt.Arts College for women, Madurai

Introduction:

The National Trust's definition of cultural heritage tourism is "traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes historic, cultural and natural resources." This paper intends to describe a de-notified heritage spot located at Trichy. The Medieval South Indian temples are acted as the hub of the socio-religious life of the people. Different scholars accepted that cultural interaction took place in these temples. The temples served as cultural centres. The Pallava rulers introduced temple architecture in Tamil Nadu. The Cholas of Vijayalaya line followed the Pallava traditions. They built a good number of temples not only in India but also in overseas. These temples are now serving as heritage tourist spots. This paper aims to describe the inheritance of Chola architecture and the poojas and festivals of the temple. The Chola rulers mostly built Siva temples. They even adorn the title Sivabada Sekaran to glorify lord Shiva. They Embellished with the most charming and excellent sculptures and architectural features and stand as the surviving specimens of the early Chola and later Chola architecture. They also served as places for cultural interaction between the different sects of Hinduism and

other religion. This paper aims to bring one of the de- notified heritage tourist spots located in Trichy district.

Location of the Spot:

Tiruchchendurai is a small village. It lies on the southern bank of river Cauvry. It is situated 10 km from Trichy and about 3 miles from the Elamanur Railway station of the Southern Railway. It has an ancient Chola temple. It was originally a Brahmadeya settlement and was known as Isanamangalam. This ancient village has attained greater importance in the history of the district from very ancient times. From the traditional point of view this temple is very significant. More than forty inscriptions are found here. These inscriptions give us information about the endowments made to the temple, its poojas and festivals and its administration. The poojas and festivals of this temple from its origin speak the glory and legacy of the temple and its surroundings.

Historical milieu of the tourist centre:

Two inscriptions recorded in the second and third regnal years of Parantaka I mention that Bhudi Aditta Pidari, wife of Arikulakesari alias Arinjaya had converted this temple into a Karrali (Stone Temple). It is clear that this temple could have been constructed in brick even prior to Parantaka I.. This also refers to the

fact that it should have come into existence during the period of Aditya I. Another inscription mentions that Karunataka Pulalayan Chetti a diamond merchant appealed to the members of the sabha of Isanamangalam to permit him to construct a Vishnu temple. Another inscription refers to the purchase of land .

According to that, lands were purchased from the sabha of Isanamangalam and the income from those lands was used for the execution of various rituals of the temple. Pulalayan after making this arrangement for laying the foundation constructed a Vishnu temple with a vimana and installed in it, the idol brought from the North with all sacrifices and rituals. It was named as pulalaya vinnagar (Vishnu temple). The donor stresses the fact that it should have been a popular Vinnagaram (Vishnu temple) and in the long run either due to the importance assigned to Saivism by the Cholas or due to the prominence of Saivism encouraged by the Velir people, the Vishnu temple might have lost its significance. So Pulalaya Vinnagar in due course would have yielded its prosperity to the Thiruchchendurai Chandrasekara temple. So throughout the Chola period this temple served as an important socio and religious hub. Nowadays this serves as the heritage tourist spot. Still people thrive into it.

The total extent of the Siva temple complex is nearly four acres. It consists of main shrine and eight subsidiary shrines. The entire temple complex is guarded by a high wall which is 20' in height extending from east to west and from north to south with its entrance on the east over which a five tier gopura (tower) has been built.

Variation in Architectural features:

When we visit a historical monument like temple, we could see only a specific style of architectural features. But this temple contains the inheritance of three dynasties. It is a unique feature. The Vishnu shrine indicates the early Chola architectural features. The entire edifice of this shrine is built in a very simple style devoid of architectural merit. There is no jagati,

kumuda ,kandam and pattigai in the adhistana It shows the early chola style of construction.

But the Chandrasekara shrine bears the later Chola architectural features. It comprises of garbhagraha, ardha mantapa. It has a ekatala vimana springs over it with a square sikara on it .The edifice from Upapitha to prastara was built of granite stone and the vimana with mortar and brick These architectural features specify that this could have been constructed at a later time. The inscriptions belonged to later Cholas like Rajaraja I, Rajendra I and Rajadhiraja I. speak the glory of the temple and it stands as the testimony of Tamils heritage . These inscriptions refer to the donations made for burning lamp (ee;jh tpsf;F) in the temple.

Another inscription of third regnal year of Vikrama Chola indicates the importance assigned to the main deity, Siva. Hence from the conversion of the temple into a Karrali (Stone temple) the Vishnu temple should have been neglected back to the secondary position. Two inscriptions belonged to the period of Aditya I also attested the same fact.. In the same way the two inscriptions belonged to the period of the second and ninth regnal years of Gandaraditta refer to the donations offered to the Parameswara of that temple.

Different inscriptions of later Chola monarchs like Kulotunga I and Vikrama Chola also available in the temple. It is understood that the Parameswara (Chandrasekara) temple should have been popular up to that period. A very late inscription dated 1581 of Sriranga Mahadeva also indicates the existence and popularity of the temple even during the time of the Vijayanagara rulers. Since this inscription found in the base of the Rajagopura , the gopura could have been constructed during that period. More than twenty unpublished lithic records refer to the poojas and festivals and administration of the temple. These poojas and festivals indicate the cultural importance of the surroundings. Till now, these festivals are performed here and serve as an important

heritage center and speak the historical glory. Since it is located on the way to Mukkombu, tourists throng to the temple.

Festivals:

Rituals and Festivals mean the religious observances of daily worship. Festival means any celebration which is periodically observed either once in a fortnight, in a month or a year. An important feature of the religious life of the people is the celebrations of the festivals in different occasions of the year. Often these festivals, which were essentially religious insignificance gained pageantry and show, are created much spectacular effect. Temple festivals provide the necessary inspiration for artists and craftsmen to display their skill in arts and crafts. Moreover they attract tourists from different parts of the country

Vaiakasi Vasantha urchavam:

Vasantha Urchavam means spring festival. For ten days this festival is observed with great enthusiasm in this temple. Hindus throng to the temple and witness the poojas to Lord Muruga. All the ten days the whole village will enjoy the fervour of the festival irrespective of religion.

Ani Thiruvadira :

During the last ten days of the waxing moon a special festival called Dola urchavam is observed in this temple. This festival comes to an end on the full moon day of the month of Ani. During the fifteen days the utsava vigrahas or the processional deities made of bronze of Lord Siva and Parvathi are placed on a swing and honoured with special worships followed by music. The divine couple brings great prosperity to the locality and its people.

Navarathiri :

In the month of Puratasi nine days commencing from the next day of the new moon of puratasi month is considered sacred to the mother goddesses. In the evening of all the nine days, the Amman is placed in a mandapa, which is well decorated with kolam and festoons and lamp. The goddess receives special poojas and naivediyams (offerings). According to the Markandeya Purana, Parvathi Devi waged a

war against Mahisasura a terrible demon who put deva rishis and other mankind into great trouble and on whom even the holy triad of the Hindu pantheon could not control. After a terrible war with him for nine days, Parvathi better known as Durga in this aspect came out victorious and her victory was celebrated by the devas on the tenth day called Vijayadasami. It is an allegory symbolizing the victory of wisdom.

Markali Thirvadirai:

According to SivaPurana Lord Shiva in the form of Nataraja danced his famous Ananda Dandava by which he creates all the karmas. According to the Tillai Sthalapuram the four great sages collectively called Camat Kumaras came to Chidambaram from the Himalayas to have a glimpse of this dance. It is known as Arudra Darshan. These festivals of this temple attract a number of tourists. It serves as the heritage tourist centre.

Car festival

One of the very old and ancient festivals that often mentioned in the devotional hymns of saints like Thirugnana sambandar and sundarar and many Tamil literature, usually held during the summer between March and April months of every year. The car festival of this temple held in the month of April (Chithirai month). The main attraction of the festival is the procession of the great temple car. It is 34 feet tall and weighs more than 30 tons. The temple authorities took paramount efforts to preserve the car all these years under a tin roof. The festival is usually attended by a large number of devotees with festive merry-making and piety.

Conclusion:

The Siva temple is not the work of one particular age but a gradual development of many centuries. Embellished with the most charming and excellent sculptures and architectural features and stand as one of the surviving specimens of the early Chola architecture. It is very nearer to Mukkombu a tourist spot and attracts the tourists. It has given an intellectual curiosity of the devotees. The

iconographical survey of the temple indicates that it has served as common place for meeting of saivite and vaishnavite culture. The poojas and festivals developed a sense of toleration and brought a peaceful co-existence among the people of this region. The temple also stands as an important monument of historical value as well as a heritage tourist centre in Trichy district

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