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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCES OF PALANI IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

K.Manivannan

Asst Professor , Dept of Indian Culture ,
Govt Arts College (Auto) Kumbakonam, TN.



ABSTRACT:

During the Sangam age Tamilnadu was divided politically into many small 'nadas' or mandalams such as Pallava, Chola, Pandya, Aruvanadu, Kongu. Some parts in Kongu as well as in later Pandya country. ie. Palani is known for its unique history, culture, civilization, art and traditions. There are evidences from literature and stone engravings, and it was also under the control of the Pandyas and the Madurai Nayaks. Palani has its name inscribed and imprinted in some inscriptions and other sources. Here various archaeological significance have been detected. In ancient times it has been used as the centre of Kongu country

KEYWORDS: Culture, Civilization, Thirumuruhatruppadai, Muruga hill, Western Ghat, Pilgrimage centre, Vaikavurnadu, Avinankudi etc.,

INTRODUCTION

Palani is situated to the east of Udumalpet Taluk of the Coimbatore District to the south of Dharapuram Taluk of the Erode District to the west of Oddanchattiram Taluk of Dindigul district and to the north of Kodaikanal Taluk of the Dindigul District and the Palani hills. Palani is situated in the Western Ghats amidst a unique natural environment. The Palani hill, one of the sacred abodes of Lord Muruga, rises to a height of 137.16M and 1068 Ft., (or) 324 M above the sea level from the Palani range. The town is linked by both rail and National Highway roads with major towns in the state. The town is at 110 km away from both Madurai and Coimbatore city.

METHODOLOGY

To form the manuscript, descriptive, analytical and comparative methods have been used. The Palani taluk lies in the north west corner of the Dindigul district. It was formerly in the Aiyampalli Taluk. The importance of Palani is due to Lord Muruga temple on the hill. The town is expanding towards the eastern side. The southern and western sides are surrounded by green fields, hills and rivers. In the Northern side, the Railway line borders the town. These sustain the natural beauty of the place.

Palani is one of the important pilgrimage centres in India and the most famous abode of Lord Muruga. Its antiquity is known through the inscription records, Tamil literature and other historical evidences. Tamil literary works such as Tolkappiam, Ahananuru, Purananuru, Pathitru-p-pattu, Sirupanarru-p-padai, Silapadhikaram, Madurai-Kanchi, Thirumurugatrupadai speak about Palani, which was under the hegemony of different rulers in Tamil Nadu right from the ancient times.

Palani is praised from time to time by various names like Pothini, Vaikavur, Vayalur, Palanimalai, Varagagiri, Thiruavinankudi, Vaiyapuri, Vaikavurnadu, Sivagiri, Chandrasailam, Sithanvalavu, Palanipari and the

like.

The name "PALANI" means Pazham Nee (or) THOU ART THE FRUIT (the fruit of all wisdom and knowledge) the endearing way in which Lord Muruga, the angry young child was coaxed and addressed by his parents Lord Siva and Goddess Parvathi. This is one of six places most sacred for Lord Muruga called "Arupadai Veedugal" and has inspired many great saints like Nakkeerar and Arunagiri Nadhar. The pilgrims and devotees from all over the country throng into the town both during festival and non-festival seasons in large numbers. Today Palani is well known as a prominent pilgrim centre and is considered to be one of the earliest towns in South India.

The Sangam rulers, early Pandiyas, Kongu Cheras, Latter Pandiya rulers, Hoysalas, Vijayanagar rulers, Nayaks, Mysore rulers and the British ruled Kongu Nadu including Palani over a period of time.

Palani is said to be a transformed form of its ancient Velir chiefs, which later formed part of Vaihavur of the Chera land. Palani is said to have been the capital of an extensive estate of the name, and one of the twenty-six palayams included in the Dindigul province till it was taken over by Mysore in a conquest and ceded to the East India Company in 1792. After this British took over the administration of the country, Palani came under their control till Independence. At present, Palani is the taluk headquarters and is one among the seven taluks of Dindigul District.

SOCIAL LIFE

Society of Palani is primarily a caste-ridden society like any other part of India. Since the ancient times down to the present day, the caste structure of society remains the same, but the increase in the number of sub-castes is a phenomenon peculiar to any caste-based society. An increase in the number of sub-castes has been taking place continuously with varying degree of stagnation and mobility from the emergence of caste system.

Palani being a cosmopolitan city, consists of people belonging to different religions and castes. The Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians live in this town. Among the Hindus, we find Brahmins, Gounders, Mudaliyars, Chettiars, Muttaraiyars, Pillais, Sourashtras, Naidus, Nadars, Harijans, Sathatha Srivaishnavas and several communities. The Brahmins held a high position in society by virtue of their spiritual authority and services to the alien rulers. They had easy access to state administration as well.

ECONOMIC LIFE

The term "Arukot Tiyaanaip Pothini" and "Ponnudai Nedunagar Pothini" denotes, that Palani was a flourishing city in the ancient period. From the early days agriculture, weaving and trade were the main occupation of the people. After independence, the economy began to take a definite shape and much importance is attached to agriculture and industries. When the temple grew in its importance it provided livelihood to artisans, intellectuals, industrialists, traders and businessman. Besides agriculture, preparing Panchamirtham, Vibuthi, Sandal Paste, Printing, Weaving, Carpentry, Siddha medicine are the other occupations of the people. Very few service industries like rice and oil mills had come up.

Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of Palani. The rich fertile agricultural and hilly tracks in the environment provides an agricultural based cultivation for the 21.48 per cent of work force in the Palani town. The total area of agriculture in Palani was 3,33,773,230 hectares. This shows the extensive area available for cultivation in Palani area. From the above government memo it is understood, that several varieties of crops were raised in the cultivated 5.149 hectares. Next is the sugarcane which is raised in 1,149 hectares. The other grains raised were millet in 226 hectares, maize in 310 hectares and pearl millet in 26 hectares and Tinai and Varagu each in one hectare, chilly and vegetables in 300 hectares, Cotton is raised in 122 hectares and oil plants in 545 hectares.

Since Palani town is situated at the foot of the Western Ghats. It produces carrot, cauliflower and beatroot and is marketed in the Palani town. The total area under commercial use is 18.94 hectare. There are daily and weekly markets in the town. The daily market (Gandhi market) is located in the Gandhi Road, Palani.

Palani is not blessed with an abundant rain monsoons because the entry of monsoons are prohibited by the Western Ghats. So the farmers mainly depend on tanks and wells in former days. Idumbankullam and

Vaiyapuri tank still remain a perennial source of water for agriculture. Two dams were built across the rivers Varadhamanadhi (1974-1978) Palaru – Puranthalaru, which flow from the Palani hills. There are 12 canals and 4293 wells and the area of land irrigated is 4,189 hectares. The total number of tanks in Palani are 51 and they irrigate 3790 hectares of land. Though there are Shanmuganadhi and Varattaru they are not suitable for irrigation and they are used only when there is a heavy rain.

The Palani town has not attracted more industrialists to start industries so far. Few service industries like textile, rice and oil mills had come up. The individual economy of Palani revolves around the temple because majority of them are connected with the temple.

RELIGIOUS LIFE

India is a land of different religions. Religion plays a predominant role in all walks of life. Different religious families live in Palani to develop a secular attitude towards their counter-parts and they, live in complete harmony with one another. Religious institution play a significant role in the day-to-day life of the community. There are 39 temples 5 mosques and 3 churches in the Palani town. Lord Arulmigu Palani Dhandayuthapani Swamy temple attracts a large number of pilgrims from all over the country.

TEMPLES IN PALANI

In India, temples play a vital role in determining the history and culture of the region and it is the case with South India, where temples have played an important role and made not only impressive contributions to religious life of the people, but also have served as the nucleus around which the social and cultural life of the people revolves.

There is a Tamil proverb meaning “Don’t live in a place where there is no temple”. Temple is a place where peace is expected to be attained. Today Palani is a well known as a prominent pilgrim centre and is considered to be one of the earliest towns in South India. The temples in Palani belong to the ancient days, and the town is popular throughout the state especially in the southern part as the abode of Lord Muruga. In Palani there are 39 temples. The important temples are Palani hill temple, Arulmigu Periyannayaki Amman temple, Lakshminarayana Perumal Temple, Padrakaliamman temple and so on At Palani, various temples have been constructed. They are the symbol of our culture and civilization. All the temples seen in this belong to the Dravidian style. Likewise, Arulmigu Periyannayaki Amman Temple is an epitome of Dravidian style of temple architecture, during the period of the Kongu Cholas, Pandya and the Nayaks. Various parts of the temple i.e., Garbhagruka Arthamandapa, Mahamandapa and Muhamandapa have been built. The original contribution of the Pandya, Chola and the Nayak have been identified through this temple architecture and sculpture. In the field of Architecture and sculpture, the nadars and Chettiers did a wonderful work in these temples. The concept of beauty, facial expressions, rhythm, proportion and symbolism have been highlighted. However the significance of architecture and sculpture of this temple is aesthetically developed. The regional concept of folk influences and Puranic descriptions have also been derived.

FESTIVALS

In Palani four important annual festivals are conducted and they are in the order of their importance. Panguni Uthiram, Thai Poosam and Kandasashti, Mariamman Festival and Vaikasi Visakam.

Other festivals of importance are Thirukarthigai, Thai Amavasai, Tamil new year, and the festival of the Cauvery on the 18th of Aadi. Throughout the Tamil month of Margazhi (mid December to mid January). Thiruppalli Ezhuchi is celebrated with the temple being opened at 4 a.m. for special poojas.

CONCLUSION

Palani is known for its unique history, culture, civilization, art and traditions. There are evidences from literature and stone engravings, and it was also under the control of the Pandyas and the Madurai Nayaks. Palani has its name inscribed and imprinted in some inscriptions and other sources. Here various archaeological significance have been detected. In ancient times it has been used as the centre of Kongu country. Generally, the

Nayaks were the great patron of Saiva architecture and sculpture. But here they have carved Vishnu forms. So one can easily assume the religious tolerance during this period. At Palani both the Chola and the Pandya influences are adopted in the architectural field. They have introduced various types of Vimana architecture.

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K. Manivannan

Asst Professor , Dept of Indian Culture , Govt Arts College (Auto) Kumbakonam, TN.

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