



FAMOUS TEMPLES IN NAMAKKAL – TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

Namakkal is one of the prosperous and historically important districts in the state of Tamil Nadu. Namakkal was part of the Tiruchirappalli District in the late 18th and early 19th century. Namakkal then became part of Salem District, but it now considered as a separate District. This is the first Asian municipality, which has been certified with ISO 14001-2004 for its exclusive and excellent environmental management system. Apart from being an industrial city, this eco-friendly place is among the pilgrimage sites of south India. This city attracts Tourists from all over the state as well as the country for its varied places of worship and rich cultural heritage. The temples in Namakkal played an important role in the religious history of Tamil Nadu and are also the marvels of brilliant architecture in South India. Generally, Namakkal is considered to be a Vaishnava Kshetram. Three popular Vaishnava temples are located around the Rock fort like Namakkal Anjaneya Temple, Lakshmi Narasimha Temple, and Ranganathaswami Temple. Namakkal Anjaneya Temple is located at the west side of the rock. The Narasimha cave is located at the foot of the hill on the west side of the rock. While the Anantasayi cave is located half-way up the east side of the hill and has a set of built-up steps leading to it. Sure the tourists who visit once may face a full stop for their problems of any kind.



KEYWORDS : *environmental management system , rich cultural heritage , pilgrimage sites.*

INTRODUCTION

Namakkal was part of the Trichirappalli District in the late 18th and early 19th century.¹ Namakkal then became part of Salem District, but it now considered as a separate District.² It is differentiated by the Salem District on the North, Karur District on the South, Trichirappalli and Salem Districts on the East and Erode District on the West. This is the first Asian municipality, which has been certified with I. S. O. 14001 - 2004 for its exclusive and excellent environmental management system. Apart from being an industrial city, this eco-friendly place is among the pilgrimage sites of south India. This city attracts Tourists from all over the state as well as the country for its varied places of worship and rich cultural heritage. The temples in Namakkal played an important role in the religious history of Tamil Nadu and are also the marvels of brilliant architecture in South India. Generally, Namakkal is considered to be a Vaishnava Kshetram. The temples are well connected in all the major cities by roadways. Namakkal Anjaneya Temple, Lakshmi Narasimha Temple, Ranganathaswami Temple are the most popular temples of Namakkal. The Narasimha cave is located at the foot of the hill on the west side of the rock. While the Anantasayi cave is located half-way up the east side of the hill and has a set of built-up steps leading to it.³

HISTORY OF NAMAKKAL

Namakkal is a historic town and head quarters of the district. Namakkal (Namam Rock), is the major town of the District. The rock therein called Namagiri is the source for the town's name. Earlier the town was known as Araikal (Rock) Hill and Thiruraikal (Holy Rock Hill) from which name Namakkal appears to have evolved. Namakkal is a part of Kongu Nadu (Kongu Desam) region of Tamil Nadu.⁴ It was ruled by Valvil Ori around 200 AD, who is praised as one of the seven great philanthropists of ancient Tamil Nadu. Later it was hotly contested and coveted by both the ancient Pallavas and the Pandiyas. Then the region was in the hands of Atikula King called Gunasila who has marriage with Pallava King. Later the district was overrun by the Cholas in the Kongu Mandalam. After the struggle between the Cheras, Cholas and Pandiyas, the Hoysalas rose to power and had control till the 14th century followed by Vijayanagar Kings till 1565 AD. Then the Madurai Nayakas came to power in 1623 A.D. Two of the Polygons of Thirumalai Nayak namely, Ramachandra Nayaka and Gatti Mudaliars ruled the Salem area.⁵ Then Golkonda Mysore kings and Muslim sulthans were ruled till A.D 1625 and the area was under the control of Marathas till 1750 A.D, after which great turmoil struck due to the war between Hyder Ali and Tippu Sulthan with the British. After that British ruled the area till independence.

ANJANEYA TEMPLE

The Hanuman temple is small but very popular. It was built recently and reflects contemporary Hindu temple style architecture. Anjaneya Temple is located facing the Narasimha Swami Kovil which contains a holy water spring known as the Narasimha

Theertham. Namakkal Anjaneyar, popularly known as Hanumantharaya Swami the legendary founder of Namagiri is very much known for his generosity in granting prayers of any kind to his devotees who troghed in thousands every day is located in the town of Namakkal, Tamil Nadu. It is an 18-foot idol of Sri Hanuman facing east, worshipping Sri Lakshmi Narasimha Swami (one of the avatar of god Vishnu) in this temple. Anjenayar idol is Swayambu, keep growing in height thus, temple has no roof enclosing. One cannot help notice that the idol of Hanuman looks directly at the Lakshmi Narasimha Swami Temple giving the feeling that Anjaneya is worshiping Lakshmi Narasimha Swami. It is said that the eye of Anjaneya is in straight line with the path or lotus feet of Lord Lakshmi Narasimha. The open-air temple for the Anjaneyar attracts thousands every day with a vow a fasting and offerings like Vadamalai and Abhishegam mediums like sesame oil, panchamirtham, soap nut powder, milk, curd, Tamarind, Sandal paste and gold ornaments. While an abhishegam is performed it is believed that the devotees blessed with boons according to the medium used. There are testimonials available to praise the Lord Anjaneya and his bounteousness. Sure the tourists who visit once may face a full stop for their problems of any kind.⁶

NAMGIRI AMMAN TEMPLE

The Narasimhar-Namgiri Amman temples sprawls a few acres in size and parts of it were built by quarrying the granite boulders out of the Rock fort several hundred years ago. It reflects historical temple architecture and offers several places to sit and reflect in solitude, and is highly recommended. A temple dedicated to the goddess Namagiri Amman. It is situated within the temple complex of the Narasimha Swami Kovil. According to the legends, Namagiri Amman appeared in the Kamalalayam and performed penance which pleased Narasimha Swami.

NARASIMHASWAMI CAVE TEMPLE

The mention of monuments belonging to the seventh and eight centuries in Tamil Nadu calls to mind primarily the magnificent rock-cut and structural temples of the Pallavas, and the somewhat lesser known examples of Pandiya rock cutting. During this same period however, the relatively unknown Atiya rulers excavated two cave-temples at Namakkal caves containing large sculptures possessing a vitality and dynamism hardly matched elsewhere.

The caves are cut into the sides of the large rocky hill in the centre of the town, and both have later structural additions in the form of mandapas and subsidiary shrines. Both the cave-temples are dedicated to Vishnu and are under worship today.

Narasimha is an avatar of the Hindu God Vishnu, one who incarnates in the form of part lion and part man to destroy an evil, end religious persecution and calamity on Earth, thereby restoring Dharma. The word 'Narasimha' consists of two words 'Nara' which means man and 'Simha' which means lion. Together to a mixed creature avatar of Vishnu.⁷ He is known as Narasingha, Narasimba and Narasingher in derivative languages. Narasimha iconography shows him with a human torso and lower body, with a lion face and typically with a demon Hiranyakashipu in his lap whom he is in the process of killing. The demon is powerful brother of evil Hiranyaksha who had been previously killed by Vishnu, who hated Vishnu for killing his brother. Vishnu understands the demon's power, then creatively adapts into a mixed avatar that is neither man nor animal and kills the demon at the junction of day and night inside and outside.⁸ Narasimha is known primarily as the 'Great Protector' who specifically defends and protects his devotees from evil.⁹ God is sitting here after the Hiranya Samharam, but with the same anger and rude eyes. His golden eyes and brave structure in a dark cave with the lights of ghee lamp might frighten everybody at the first sight.

God Lakshminarasimha is surrounded by Sanakan, Sanathanan, Suryan, Chandran, Bramha and Siva. Sanakan and Sanathanan (sons of Bramha) is always conveying the happenings in the world in a secret manner, Suryan and Chandran is always doing Chamara Samarpanai (fanning) to reduce his anger. Lord Bramha and Siva came down to Namakkal as Devotees to have Dharsan of Lord Lakshminarasimha. Because of Hiranva samharam, (killed King Hiranya with Gods' nails), there are some BLOOD STAINS on the right hand palms, which is believed to be the blood of King Hiranya. This is very rare to have a Dharsan of this blood stains on Lord Narasimha hands.

This is one of the special temples with the merit of Thirumurthy Sthalam, in which Lord Bramha, Siva and Vishnu resides in the same temple and situated in the same golden chair. This Cave temple is one of the best examples of the architecture and sculpture intelligence of Pallava's Kingdom. This cave is really big in size and desired by craving as roof, floor and pillars.

ANANTASAYI CAVE TEMPLE

The Anantasayi temple consists of a rectangular shrine, with two pillars and two pilasters along the front. The steps between the central pillars interrupt the adishthana molding which is similar to that in the Narasimha cave. The ardhmandapa in front is a narrow hall of slightly greater length than the shrine, but no wider, with two pillars and a once open frontage. Here two a wall has been built up to enclose the cave which now has their door of the cave protects a few feet forward in a curve. They are divided in two massive square forms with an octagonal kattu between them and the sadurams are decorated with lotus madallions.¹⁰

A rock-cut cave temple is situated on the eastern side of the Namgiri rock. It is dedicated to the "one who lies on Anantha". It is popularly known as the Ranganathar Kovil. An adhiyaman, named Athiyendhra Gunaseelan, excavated the temple in the early eighth century and called it Athiyantha Vishnu Graham. This temple includes a small shrine for Ranganayaki, the consort of Ranganathar.

The shrine contains an enormous rock-cut image of Lord Vishnu reclining on the five-hooded serpent, karkotaka, and surrounded by attendant figures. The inscription identifies the figures as Bhrgu, Brahma, Chandra, Dhaksha, Garuda, Guru, Kaitabha, Markandeya, Sani, Sarnga, Srimadhu, Surya, Thumburu, Varna, Isa, Sasi, Kaupotaka (gada), Chakra, Nantaka (khadga), panchanjanya (sankha). The representation would seem to belong to the uttama classification. On the wall in front of the central shrine are panels showing Vishnu's manifestations of Thirivikrma, Sankaranarayana, and Balanarasimha. The Thirivikrama

Panel is similar to an equally impressive as the vama panel in the other rock-cut temple on the western side of the Namagiri rock. The figure of Sankaranarayana shows a stiffly standing figure. Its right half is Siva and the left half is Vishnu, is sculpted on the opposite wall of the ardhmandapa.¹¹

The vamana purana explains the form as a manifestation to a rishi to whom Vishnu explained that he and Siva were really one. The side representing Vishnu has one had placed in the Katyavalambita hasta, and the other rose with the sankha with tongues of flames depicted just above the hand. Siva is shown with one hand holding a snake, and the raised hand with a deer just above it.

The standing figure of Kevala or Bala Narasimha on the adjoining wall is depicted in a relaxed pose is slender and graceful. His two upper arms have the sankha and chakra depicted just above them. The figure is depicted with a kirita makuta unlike the standing Kevala Narasimha in Badami cave IV who has a crown shaped as a louts bud. As compared to the natural lion face at Badami, the depiction here is definitely stylized in a manner similar to that seen in the Narasimha cave.

CONCLUSION

Apart from Temples Namakkal is also famous for its eco friendly tourist place like Kolli Hills, Forts and Dams. The economy of the district was primarily agricultural, but as on today it has changed its occupation to Lorries, Educational Institutions, Poultry Farms and real estates. So, Poultry, Lorry Transport and related businesses drive the economy of the town. Namakkal is famous for its Poultry farms. It is India's 2nd biggest egg producing region (producing three crore eggs per day). National wide Namakkal is known for body building of truck, trailer, tanker and rig unit. About 300 units in Namakkal are engaged in this activity. . It is one of the flourishing and historically important districts in Tamil Nadu.

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