



## HISTORY OF SRI IYARAPPAR TEMPLE AT THIRUVAIYARU

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### ABSTRACT

Thiruvaiyaru is situated 13 kms northwards from Thanjavour. It is being watered and irrigated by the river Kaveri. The place has three greatness namely the God Murthi, the place and the holy water. It is one among the 276 places situated north of Kaveri which have been cited in the Devaram songs. There are 18 Devarapathikam sung in praise of this place. Moreover it is praised for its sanctity by the great sages like. The great Saiva Saints by Appar, Sambanthar, Sundarar and Manikavasagar, Pattinathar, IyaratigalKadavarkon, Arunagirinathar, Ramalinga Adigalar and Sri Thyagarajar have also sung about this place and called as Thiruvaiyaru considered equal to Kasi. The place claims as the only "Mukthi Mandapa" where people like Nandi Devar, Mahavishnu and Agasthiyar received the religious counsel and were able to attain "Mukthi". The Sthala Purana says that if one goes to pray the 'Panjaksara' mantra in this "Mukthi Mandapa" he will get high benefits. Kodahanallur Sri Sundara Swamigal, Arutprahaasa Vallalar and Thyaharajar have also stayed in this abode for many days and prayed the Lord here. Aim of the research paper is to carryout the significant history of Thiruvaiyaru Temple.

**KEYWORDS:** The Reason for the Name Thiruvaiyaru, The holy water and the Tree Murthies; The name of the God, Thirunandhi Thevar, Agasthiyar, The Thevara Pathihas and the Sthala Puranam....

### INTRODUCTION

Among the temple festivals that occur in Tamilaham the one that is celebrated with great fervour at Thiruvaiyaru is known as "Elur" festival. It is indeed a blessing to witness during this festival ThirunanthiamPeruman with Suam Prahasai Ambihai and the Nayahi who developed morals coming to the places like Thirupalanam, Thirusorruthurai, Thiruvethikudi, Thirukandiur, Thirupunthuruthi and Thiruneithanam by walk in the glass palanqueen.

Those who had come to these places by walk special mention should be made of Sri Thyaharajar Swamigal, Dr.U.V.Swaminathaiar, Tamilvel, S.V. Umamaheswaran Pillai, Navalar N.M.Venkatasami Natar and Prof. K. Subramanian Pillai. Sri Thyagaraja Swamigal had sung many Keerthanas in various ragas on the deity of the sthala. He sang in "two Keerthanas in Bilagiri raga and four Keerthanas in Gowri Manohari and Adana Malavasri Saranga ragas. On Sri Panchanatheeswarar later he sang on Sri Dharmasamvardini nine Keerthanas in Saveri Thodi, Reethikoulai, Mathamavathi, Adana, Yamuna Kalyani and Arabi Ragas.

### METHODOLOGY

To prepare the manuscript both analytical and descriptive research methods are used here. The Arasar college in this place was first initiated by the king Sarafoji as a small school to teach the Vedas and

today it has grown up as a learning centre of Tamil and north Indian music, dance and musical instruments.<sup>1</sup> According to the words of Appar that God is the sound of one goes to the north of it will re-echo in this place.<sup>2</sup>

### The Reason for the Name Thiruvaiyaru

This place has been called by different names like Iyaru, Panjaram', Poologakailayam, Sepahal, Jeevan Mukthipuram and Kaveri kottam. Since Abiseha was performed for the deity of Thiruvaiyaru with the waters of the five rivers like Kaveri, Kudamuruti, Vennaru, Vettaru and Vadaru the place was named as Thiruvaiyaru. Moreover Abiseha for Iyappar is performed with the five things known as Panjakavyam consists of milk, curd, ghee, komayam and kosalam and hence it received the name Thiruvaiyaru.

### The holy water and the Tree

There are various Theerthas like the Kaveriaru, Suriyapushkarani (Ayanari theertham), Samudra-Theertham and Thevampirthatheertham. Among them the Suriyapushkarani and Kaveri Theerthams are significant. It is believed that if one takes bath once in the Kaveri it is equal to taking bath completely in the Thulamatham in the other Theerthas for it is highly beneficial. Along with the embankment there is a Mandapa known as 'Poosamandapathurai. Here the sthalavruksha is Vilva tree.

### Murthies; The name of the God

Iyarappar, is the Svayambu Murthi. He is named differently as Iyarappar, Sempontsothiyar, Jepesar, Kayilayanathar, Pranatharthiharar, Panchanathiswarar and Mahatheva Pandaraharar are the name found in the stone inscriptions. There is no Abiseha for the Linga here since it is made of Prithvi (mud). 'Abiseha' is done only on Avudaiar. For the Linga only Punuhu perfume has been dedicated. It is on seeing the uniformity found between the two places that Appar Swamigal has sung in his Thiruvaiyatra Thandaham that the Lord pervades in all the world. Here he celebrates the two places namely Thiruvaiyaru and Kanchi. Similarly the Vanmihanather in Thiruvarur is also a Prithvi Linga. Manikavasagar also sings by combining the two places namely Thiruvaiyaru and Thiruvarur.<sup>3</sup>

### The Name of the Goddess

The goddess is called by different names like Aranayahi, Thiripurasundari, Tharumambigai, Dharmasamvarthini and Thirukama Kottathu, Aludaia Nachiar. The Purana says that Kanchi Kamatchiannai received from the God 2 Nali paddy and observed 32 ethics. Later she started to do penance likewise the goddess here also observed penance after getting 2 Nali paddy and also undergoing 32 austre ethics and claimed the names Nayahi who propagated ethics and also Dharmasamvarthini. The temple of Kamatchi Ammai is called Thirukamakottam. The shrine of the goddess residing in this temple is known as Thirumakotta ulahudai Natchiar as mentioned in two inscriptions. Sekilar in his "Periyapuramam" speaks of the greatness of Kanchi Annai and Thiruvaiyaru Thirukamakotta Ambigai for having spread the 32 arams (dharmas).

In other Siva temples, Ambal is seen in the standing posture with 4 hands bearing the Abaya Varatha hasthas. The goddess here is seen in a different pose with the left hand not in the Vara hastham. She is seen inclining on the waist and bearing in her two upper hands the conch and wheel. Hence she appears in the figure of Mahavishnu. This avatar has been sung by Appar. There are many Ganapathy found here called as OlamitaVinayahar, Aathi Vinayahar and Vallapa Vinayahar. The Lord Muruga seen here bears the weapons like the bow and arrow and the Vel and is named as the Dhanushsubramanar. The deity Dakchinamurthi bears another name called Sri Hariguru Sivayoga Dakchinamurthi. This is one among the eighteen murthas of Dakchinamurthi. He has in the right hand of his upper hands the Kabalam, the trident in the left side sin Muthirai in the lower right hand Sivagnanabotham, in the left hand and under the feet the figure of the tortoise Kurma.<sup>4</sup>

In the southern entrance he is seen with Yema (one who takes the life) under his feet in a state of persecuting him, Kunguliam is used for bhoojas. This is one the greatness of this sthala.

### Thirunandhi Thevar

One Silatha sage was dejected for he did not have any issue. Hence he began to do penance by performing Poojas for Iyarappar. At once a voice (asariri) asked him to do a special Pooja to get a son. It continued that when he does this Pooja by performing Yaha on the pretext to rouse the earth a casket will be seen in which there would be a son who would be 16 years of age and the devotee could own him as his son. The follower did as advised by the voice. To his arrangement he found a "Murthi" with four shoulders, three eyes and the hair with the Chandran and he fell to his heels. Iyarappar also commanded the sage to open the casket and he did as advised and to his surprise found a beautiful human body. The parents called him Sepahan and nursed him. The boy was an expert in the Sastras and in all arts even at the age of fourteen.

The parents became sad for they have to lose him at the age of 16 the boy came to the temple performed Poojas bathed in the Ayanari Theertham, landed one leg on the other and was engaged in acute penance. The body of the boy was eaten up by the snakes and the fishes. The parents and others on seeing the body not out of the water were crest fallen. The God in return for the boy's ardent love for the deity appeared before them and endowed him with all the boons that he wanted the 16 fortunes. On seeing this the deity showering good and healthy life on the boy performed Abiseha by himself with the holy waters of Gangai Brahmarkamanda the milk from the breast of the goddess Kondal Meham Neer and also from the mouth of Idapanandhi. The boy was removed of his human features and was like Suriyan.<sup>5</sup>

The Silatha sage gave his son in marriage to the daughter of sage Viyakrapatha and the sister to Umanthiyu sage in the Punar Poosa Natchaktra. Later Sebesar received the advise of Iyarappar and the leader of sivaganas. Moreover he was the Dwara figure at the first entrance of the temple he was also called as Athihara Nandi and Nandi Keswarar. In many of the songs of Thirumandira he is mentioned as Nandi. In the temples of Siva, the Rishapa Thevar in the form of a call facing the sanctum is called Nandikeswarar by the people.

### Agasthiyar

Agasthiyar came girted by the Mathavars to this temple after having bath in the Suriya Pushkarani relieved of the permanent Karma worshipped the Sempotchothiyar thanked him and without food. To get the divine grace of the God he adopted austere penance humbled himself and worshipped the Lord in return also gave the form of small and said that he would be hence forth called as Gurumuni. This name stands till today. Agasthiyar pleaded to the God that his wish was to see Kayilai and the Lord also chaunted the Panjaksaram and allowed him to dip in the Suryapushkarani. Then he reached Kayilai.<sup>6</sup>

### Those who Attained Mukthi

The Devara who did Pooja here and attained Mukthi are Thirumal, Brahma, Indira, Suriya and the sages like Agasthiyar, Gowtham, Kasipar, Angirasar, Athiri, Piruhu, Vasishtar, Sathananthar and Silathar those who attained Mukthi here are, Sivathanan, Dushpiravathi, Dushpiragan, Sivapiriyar, Surathan, Dharmanasan, Nathasama Valiar, Suasrethan and Karikalan.

### The Thevara Pathihas and the Temple Festivals

Sampanthar, Appar and Sundarar had sung 5,12 and 1 pathiham on this sthala respectively. There had been many Sthala Puranas for this Sthala. They are Thiruvaiatru Puranam, Jepsisamanyam, Panjanatha manmian Sha Panjanathi Thothiram. In the Tamil month Chithirai a great festival will be celebrated. It is for 12 days. The celebration on the fifth day is very renowned. On that day Iyarappar will perform Pooja for himself. Besides, on that the Thiruneithanam that arrive from places for the Murthies and the elders of the saiva Acharyas Mahesuvara Pooja will be conducted. This is a paramount festivals. On this day Iyarappar

along with Nayahi and Nandiam Perumal with Suyam Prahasa Ammai will appear at Thirupalanam and 6 other Sthalas with benefits and on the next day morning will appear in the Thiruvaiyaru. This happens in the Tamil month Chithirai. On the waxing moon day of the Tamil month Aadi Kailaya Nathar will appear for Appar Swamigal which is a famous festival celebrated here. On the waning moon day and Vishveeniya days Iyarappar will appear on the streets and will endow holy water at the river Kaveri. The marriage of Thirunandithevar is celebrated in the Tamil month Panguni. For this Iyarappar along with Nayahi will appear at Thirumalupadi.<sup>8</sup>

### The structure of the Temple

In this temple there are 5 Praharas. Both the sannathi is face towards the east. In the first Praharam Dakchinamurtham is put up which is great in its own way. In this prahara itself all the Parivara Murthas and also the Murthas of Umameshwarar, Sankaranarayanan, Brahmaathevar and Thiripura Sundari Murthas also appear.

In the second Prahara an independent temple has been put up for Somaskandar. Here the Panjabhudalangeras, the Sappthamathars Aathivinayahar and the Navagrahas are dedicated in accordance with the rules of the Ahamas. On the walls of this prahara the ancient Puranas have been drawn. Moreover in this round the divine figures of the Murthas of Vinayagar, Subramaniam, Somaskandar, Dakchinamurthi, Natarajar and the Sappthasthala have been dedicated.<sup>9</sup>

In the third Prahara the Aasthana Mandapa, the Saiva Samaya Prasanga Saba Mandapa, the Mahasalai and the Madapalli have been constructed. There are two Gopuras in the east and South of this Prahara. In Sri Kailaya the God from the south entrance will come to endow blessings. Likewise it is believed in the earthly Kailaya here from the south entrance the God will come during the Utsav days. In the south Prahara of the fourth round the holy pond namely Suryapushkarani the south kailayam where Appar found the Olahmadevicharam which is north Kailayam have been constructed. In 3 places of this round namely in the east, south and west Gopurams are found. At the entrance of the south Gopuram there is the Aatkondar sannithi. In the Esana corner of the Swamy temple is the temple of Ammai. There are independent Rajagopuras in the Swamy sannithi of the second round and in the Ammai Sannathi.<sup>10</sup>

This temple sprawl in an area of nearly 15 acres. Murugan Shrine has been called by Arunagirinathar as Velavankottam. The Prahara Temple Datchina Kailayam temple is located on the western bank of the Surya Pushpakarani pond. Utharakailayam temple is an independent one stands on the north in the fourth round and is called Olahmadevicharam. The Dandapani Temple is found in the hundred pillared Mandapa next to the Rajagopura in the outer Prahara.

Sri Ambal, The divine name of Ammaiar is as Thirukama Kottathu Aludaiya Natchiar and Ulagudaiya Natchiar in the two stone inscriptions. Now she is known by these names also as nayahi who propagated ethics and Tharmambigai.<sup>11</sup>

This Sthala was known as Rajendra Singavalanadu Poigai Nadu Thiruvaiyaru during the reign of Rajaraja chola. In the days of Kulottunga III as Puvana Muluthudaiyar Valanadu Poigai Nadu Thiruvaiyaru. It is also called as Rajaraja Valanadu Poigai nadu Thiruvaiyaru in the Jadavarma Sundara Pandya. Many of the Sthalas bear the "Kottam" and the Chathurvethi Mangalam but here it has been as Poigainadu Thiruvaiyaru. Hence a conjecture arises whether it would have been an independent place.

### Olahamadevicharam

This shrine is found to the north side of Iyarappar Temple with big Prahara known as Utthara Kailayam. It was built by Olahmahadeviyar Thanthisakti Vidangi the Chief Queen of Rajaraja the great. Hence it is called Olahmadevicharam. Rajaraja I was anointed in 985 A.D. Among the temples that were found in his 21st regnal year this temple claims to be the most ancient one. Hence it would have been built before 1006 A.D. It is guessed that it would have been constructed nearly 1000 year. After having constructed the temple Olahmadevicharam, she installed Sivalinga, Somaskandar and other minor gods. There is another name for Somaskandar namely Olagaveethividangar.

Here also the Chithirai Matha festival has been celebrated with gaiety. Moreover she arranged to celebrate her husband's birthday monthly on the Sathaya day. The inscriptions mentioned are carved some of the ornaments like Thalkubukambi, Thiricharam, Oranai, Thiruchandam, Muthuvayal and Pattihai. From that we came to know about the jewellery that the people decorated a with and the dress that they more. Likewise a ware by name Manavatil has been mentioned. For the temple separate registrar and 32 Kulathuthithar have been appointed. For these there was a leader by name Aiaran Kaliyuga Sundarathalai Koli.<sup>12</sup>

### Thiripuvanamahadevicharam

There was a temple bearing this name. An inscription says this has been that it was built in the days of Kulotunga - III in the second Prahara.

### Thenkailayam

It is found in the temple of Aiarappan temple in the south Prahara. The ArthaMandapa is a stones temple the Maha Mandapa and the Karpagruha all these three portions are gerted by the "ThirumaligaiPatthi". Appar Swamigal is beautifully structured. It has been renovated by Rajaraja Cholan I's wife Panjavan Mahadevi. The name of the God is Panja Nadivanan and the goddess Anjalai. Mukti Mandapa, such type of Mandapa is found in places like Nagapatinam. Thiruvaiyaru and Kasi. It is called the Mandapa of this Sthala namely Aipasi Mandapa.<sup>13</sup> Hundred pillared mandapa even today this Mandapa is the Dandapani Swamy Temple. Apart from this the Aasthana Mandapa and the "Pirasangasaba Mandapa all found in the third Prahara. The Sokattan Mandapa is in the Iyarappa Sannathi.<sup>14</sup>

### Sculptures

The sculptures of this place are time immemorial. The figure of Brahma is indeed very capturing. If one goes to worship Shethrabala and Emayan who is under his feet will receive bravery and courage. The artistic sculptures that are found in this outer wall of Dakchina Kailaya Karpagruha and Kodungai belongs to the days of Chalukyas. The researchers of Sculptures say that beautiful sculpture of this type are also found at Hemavathi a place in Ananthapur district.<sup>15</sup>

### The Stone Inscriptions

In this temple there are four shrines namely Iyarappan temple Olahmadevicharam, South Kailayam and Thiripuvana Ma devicharam. There are many stone inscriptions in this temple. If one goes to study about the structure of the temple the pillars and the Kodungai forms, it can be understood that they are very old. The sculptures of the reign of the Pallavas ranks the top in the lid. In the sculptures at Mamallapuram cave temple Dwarabalaha with two hands with the leg slightly slanted stands in a highly airy way wherever such a structure is found it displays its antiquity. At the entrance of Thiruvananthapuram of Thiruvaiyaru Iyarappan temple the Dwara Balaha stands with two hands. Hence it can be guessed that it was the creation of the days of the Pallavas. In the Somaskandar temple Dwara Balaha is found with four hands along with the Vakisathantha it is conjectured to belong to the reign of the Pallavas.

At the third Prahara of the lower Gopuram the religious work of Vikran Cholan can be understood from the stone inscriptions. It stands for antiquity and to be renovated. The stone inscription says that the divine figures long back were hidden and it was Vanavan Marayan who brought it to the limelight. For this sthala there are more than 70 stone inscriptions. Majority of them have been cut to steps by the government. These stone inscriptions were taken, have found in the Annual Report on Epigraphy in the year 1894,1918 and 1924.<sup>16</sup> During the reign of Parantaka - I many works have been done from 905-947. Parantaka- I and his queen have donated land silver and gold to this temple for lighting the lamps from morning to night.

There are 17 inscriptions that speak about him from 985-1014. It is guessed that during the reign of Rajaraja I from 985- 1014 these inscriptions might have been inscribed. Several inscriptions of Rajaraja says

that land was donated for burning the lamps in this temple. The inscriptions also speak that during his nineteenth regnal year his consort has donated many lamps for this temple.<sup>17</sup> An inscription of Koparakesarivarma Rajendra Chola was found in a ruined condition. Another inscription belonging to the third regnal year of Rajendra Chola –II 1051-1063 A.D., records the land has been donated to Thiruvaiyaru temple. The inscriptions belonging to the third and fourth regnal years of the Kulottunga-I also found in this temple. They speak endowments made by the king for lighting the lamps in this temple.

An inscription that starts as Rajakesarivarma gives the land boundary of the land given to Mahathevan Thiruvamuthin of Thiruvaiyaru. From the inscriptions of this temple it can be known that Thiribhuvanamideviyar is the wife of Prantaka I.

An inscription belongs to the second regnal year of the Pandya king Jatavarman Sundarapandya mentions that he donated land for worship in this temple. Devarayar (1422-49 A. D.), the Vijayanagar King and Sadasivarayar (1680 A. D.) had given lands for Utthira Kailayam and Iyarappar Temple. For Thenkailaya Nayanar Temple, Ammangadevi had given 20 kms of gold (a measurement). Hence she has been praised as Puvana Muluthuraihal. Another inscription informs that Veerakovan, the son of Veeramukana Udaiyar had given 19 Veli ( measurement ) of land for Poojas.

There are 18 stone inscriptions without any name and the year. The information collected from the inscriptions are;

1. To light the Thiruvaiyaru temple, Paramhathevar Sivapuri king endowed 25 'Kalanju' gold (measurement).
2. To meet the whole subsidy of the temple of Rajaraja Valanadu Poigai nadu at Thiruvaiyaru donations were given.
3. In temples like Thiruvaiarudiyar Aaludai Natchiar Olahamadevicharamudaiyar and Thirupuvana Madevicharamudaiyar the carpenters right their duty have been written.
4. Anindhithai, the daughter of Eladarayar donated lands to give food for the Aathisaivars daily and also for the Thirupallielitchi Pooja.
5. Ornaments like Thalapatikambi, Thirucharam, Panjahari, Patihai, and Kudambai were given for Dakshinamurthi at Then Kailayam.
6. The names of those who were indispensable for history like Paluvetaraiar, Arulmoli Chandaramalli and Gangamadeviar and ladies in the department of administration like Adhiharachi Kunjaran Eruthan Kunjaramalli and Adhiharachi Somaiyan Amithramalli have been members is indeed to be noted.<sup>18</sup>

### Divine service or Renovation work

The first to do service in this temple was Piriavaruthan, the Surya vamsa Chakravarthi. When he came to this Sthala on a Pilgrimage he did divine service here and also perform Mahakumbabisheham on the instigation of Asari. This is the history in the sthala purana. The second service was done by Karikal Peruvalathan, the great sangam Chola king. When he came after planting the flag in the Himalayas to this place his Ratha got struck at an object and when he dug it he found the sculptural figures of Sivalingam, Ambihai, Vinayahar, Subramaniar, Sabthamather Chandesa and Saints.

Niyameesar the Saint and he at once worshipped them. Niyameesar gave the thanda to the king which will win any body and asked him to do services for this temple. The king was sad since there was no things for the service. At once Niyameesar appeared and said that the king would find gold jewellery and stones under the feet of Nandi. The king in turn also did this service and performed Kumbabisheha. Many inscriptions inform the services and endowments made by the later chola.

Later Krishna Raja Udaiyar demolished the thiruchurru of the temple and renovated it. Before that there was the thiruchurru and palace on the sides of the temple. Later in the days of Pukanna Udaiyar the descendent of Virasevanna Udaiyar in (1381 A.D.) the Mandapa and the moaf of the temple were renovated.<sup>19</sup> In the reign of Achuthapa Naicker Maruthur Aanaia Pillai and his younger brother Vaitthiganatha Annan the Gopura, the Prahara, the south Gopuram of the third Prahara were constructed.<sup>20</sup> They also

constructed the third prahara, padithurai, Gopura and named it as Kalyanasindu. There are the sculptures of Anaiakullai, Vaithianathan Annan and the parents of them in the west Prahara. Similarly the figures of Achuthapa Naickar and his wife are also here. Likewise the figures of Pachiappa Mudaliar along with his two wives are in the Mandapa.<sup>21</sup>

### CONCLUSION

Govinda Dikshitar, the minister of Achuvudappa Naicker did services to this temple. In the year 1784 Kanchipuram Pachiappa Mudaliar also did services to this temple. Thiru Meiappa Chettiyar and Sriman Sevuhana Chettiyar, renovated Ambal temple and also did services. In 1937 the Kumbabiseha was performed. The Garpagraha of the Ammaiyaar temple is under construction. These service oriented people also built the Utsav Mandapa and the RajaGopura in the same temple and also did many services.

Kailayam and the Pushpa mandapa was also renovated. During the days of Sri La Sri Shanmuga Desiga Gnanasambandha Paramacharya Swamigal the head of the Dharmapuram Adheenam in 31.3.1971 the Vimanas and the Gopuram were renovated and finally the Ashta pandana Mahakumbabiseha was performed. The temple has been maintained by the income of the temple from the lands, shops, house etc.

This temple is under the control of Dharmapura Atheenam by Sri La Sri Shanmuga Desiga Gnanasambandha Paramacharya Swamigal.

### END NOTES:

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