



## CAVE ROCK TEMPLES IN KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THIRUMALAI MAHADEVA TEMPLAE AND THIRUNANDIKARA MAHADEVA TEMPLE

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### ABSTRACT

*Temples are considered as abodes of Gods and Goddesses. They are the main stage and backbone of Hinduism. Normally people get comfort and solace in visiting temples. Hence, ancient kings and chieftains built temples to attract the attention of the people. Kanyakumari district is the southernmost part of Tamilnadu. Kanyakumari is a land of temples. Temples formed the nucleus of social life in the country. They integrated the various segments of the society from diversity. Temple is a place of worship. A sacred house of gods and goddesses, it catered to the religious needs of the people and provides a link between man and god and the earthly life and the divine life. Worshipping gods in temples not only infuses divinity and purity to the heart of the devotees but also it is natural outlet of their religious impulses and sentiments. They believed that if gods and goddesses were appeased, there would be rain and prosperity.*

KEY WORDS: ROCK TEMPLE, WORSHIP, FESTIVELS, SIVALAYAM,

## INTRODUCION

Kanyakumari district is noted for famous temples such as Suchindram temple, Nagaraja temple, Chitharal cave temple, Adikeshava temple, twelve Sivalaya temples, Kumarakovilmurugan temple, KollamkodeBhagavathitemple, Mandakkadu Amman temple etc.Kanyakumari district is noted for various religious groups such as Jains. The Saivaites and Vaishnavities. They came and established their religion in this region. They constructed the temples for their worship and for the worship of public.The most important rock cut cave temples are the cave temple at Chitharal, Thirunandikarai and Kurathiyari. Even before the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C the jains established there religious centers at various parts of South India. Kanyakumari district is one among these jaincenters. They created rock cut cave temples for their worship. These temples are different from other temples.

## NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Temple is a place of worship. A sacred house of gods and goddesses, it catered to the religious needs of the people and provides a link between man and god and the earthly life and the divine life. Kanyakumari District is having temples of great antiquity and cultural importance. Temples also functioned as a source of history. Music and dance formed a regular part of the temple festivals. Educational institutions were also run by the temples The South Indian temples have always played a vital role in the religious, social, cultural and economic life of the people District.

## Temples of Kanyakumari District

Kanyakumari, the southernmost district of Tamil Nadu is blessed with places of legendary historical and artistic importance. Within as area of 1684 sq.km, there are more than 600 of which the temple of Kumari Bhagavathi at Kanyakumari, the temple of Thanumalaya is Suchindrum, Nagaraj a temple at Nagercoil; Subrahmanya temple at Velimalai, Marungoor and Vellimalai, the Madhusudana temple at Parakkai, Alagammankoil at Vadiveeswaram, Sri Krishna temple at KrishnanKoil, Meenakshi temple at Aralvoimozhi, Bhudalingaswamytemple in Bhoothapandi, Bhagavathi temple at Mandaikkadu, Neelakandaswamy temple Padmanabhapuram, Tiruvindaikkodu Mahadeva temple, the temple at Keralapuram where the image of Vinayaka changes its colour half-yearly, Tiruvattar Adikesavapperumal temple, Tirparappa Mahadeva temple, Tirunandikkarai Rock-cut-cave temple, Tiruppanni kodu Mahadeva temple the Cave Temple at Chitharal, Bathrakali temple at Kollemcode; Bhadreswari temple at Koottalumoodu and Valvachagoshtam Bhagavati temple are the most important temples.

The present investigation is passing light on the **“CAVE ROCK TEMPLES IN KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THIRUMALAI MAHADEVA TEMPLAE AND THUNANDIKARA MAHADEVA TEMPLE.**

## BRIEF HISTOY OF SIVALAYA OTTAM

It is believed that Shivarathiri is a spiritual festival celebrated throughout India in order to get the blessings of Lord Shiva for the removal of our sin. Even though it is a national festival in India, it is a unique one in the district of Kanyakumari.

The twelve Shiva temples closely related with the celebrated "*ShivalayaOttam*" are situated in the two taluks of Vilavancode and Kalkulam of present Kanyakumari District.

The temples at Thirumalai, Thikkuruchi, Thirparappu, Thirunandikkarai, Ponmanai, Pannippaham and Thirunattalam are situated in the Vilavancodetaluk and the rest of the temples situated at Kalkulam, Melancode, Thiruvidaicode, Thiruvithancode and Thiruppantricode come under Kalkulamtaluk.

Nowhere else in the country, except in Kanyakumari district, where it is celebrated as an integration of Saivism and Vaishnavism two major sects of Hinduism. It is a rare example of Saiva-Vaishnava unity.

Those who participate in this marathon journey will start their fasting since *Ekathasi* of *Masi* month and will take food once in a day. On the previous day of Shivarathiri, they will start their journey without taking any food and chanting the slogas like *Govinda*,

*Gopala*. Significantly these slogas are associated with Lord Vishnu and they are using these slogas while going to the Shiva temples. This is a rare and unique one in India.

Regarding the art, architecture and sculpture, these temples are very good examples for Dravidian and Travancore style. The temple at Thirnanthikarai attracts much attention due to its Jain influence where a Rock-cut temple is also there. A cone shaped vimana is available in the ThirunattalamSankaranaraya temple.

On the day of Shivaratri, the devotees wearing the saffron coloured robes and uttering the words "*GovindaGopala*" starting from **Thirumalai** and finish their marathon running journey at **Thirunattalam** touching **Thikkuruchi**, **Thirparappu**, **Thirunandikkarai**, **Ponmanai**, **Pannippagam**, **Kalkulam**, **Melancode**, **Thiruvidaicode**, **Thiruvithancode**, **Thiruppantricode** covering nearly 110 kilometers within 24 hours.

## THIRUMALAI TEMPLE

Regarding the celebrated "*ShivalayaOttam*", the marathan pilgrimage starts at Thirumalai, a village situated very near to Munchirai village. The place Thirumalai was previously called by *Srisailanatham*, *Mangalagiri*, *Mangalathiri*, and *Sampugiri*etc.



Significantly, we can see the remains of a fort very near to the temple. It is called as *Uthachikottai* (Uthachi fort) in common parlance. The name of the fort itself speaks about volumes of information on the reason behind the construction of the fort. It is believed that a ruler of Madurai along with his princess *Uthaichi* came to this place, stayed there, and worshipped the God regularly for 41 days. The king had no issues so far. After getting a male child, the king and the queen named the child after *ThirumalaiMahadevar*-the presiding deity of the temple. That child was none other than ThirumalaiNayak, one of the most celebrated Nayak rulers of Madurai. It is believed that ThirumalaiNayak's father had donated a 7½ kg golden coat (*Angi*) and a copper plate which refers the land donation. Another notable feature of this temple is its fish symbol. It proves that this temple would have been maintained by the Pandyas. The position of 'Nandhi' statue also attracts the attention of the visitors. Normally 'Nandhi' will be installed straight opposite to the presiding deity. In this Mahadevar temple, Nandhi has been installed just opposite to the sanctum-sanctorum but in a slightly diverted position. In the temple utsav i.e. the main festival, which happens in the *Shivaratri* period, the first devotee who participates in the *ShivalayaOttamis* hoisting the temple holy flag.



## THIRUNANDIKARA ROCK TEMPLE



## INSCRIPTION



## MAHADEVATEMPLE

Thirunandikara cave temple is situated in the Northwestern part of Kanyakumari district. The rock cut cave temple at Thirunandikarai is on the southern slopes of the hill. It consists of a varanda with supporting pillars. One small chamber contained on image. A rectangular hall is found in front of a sanctum sanctorum. The jains had rock cut temple for worship because they believed that in such places the devotees will feel the presence of god.

There are 11 inscriptions found at Thirunandikarai. The earliest inscriptions belonging the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The inscriptions in the rock cut cave temple at Thirunandikara mention the name of the Ay ing Vikramadithya Varaguna and his activities. The Huzur office plate which belong to King Vaniguna, Ay king added a lady member of the royal family named Muunigansenthi embraced Jainism in the presence of Viranathiadical a Jain monk. The inscription on the eastern wall of the rock cut cave temple which belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Chola king Raja Raja I. It records the grants given to the temple for the celebration of Aipasisathyam a birthdays of the king.

## **CONCLUSION**

Jainism began to decline after the arrival of ThiruGnanaSambanthar in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The Jains were forcefully converted into Sivaites and Vaishnavites. The Jains preached love and passion and so they never opposed them and so some of them migrated to North and the rests were converted into other religions. The Jain texts were burnt and thrown into the river to decay the growth of Jains. Their centres were ruined, they were hanged them, make them as prostitutes and slaves during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The history of killing 8000 Jains in a single day in order to establish Hinduism during the times of poet ThiruNavukkarasar along with the Pandyan king. The religious debates broke down in Kanyakumari district after the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The Sivaites and Vaishnavites unanimously joined together and opposed Jains because they had a glorious growth. As a result, the Sivarathi or Sivalaya Ottam was a symbol of their unity reciting as 'Govala Govintha' and many Siva temples have a particular position to Vishnu. The twelve Shiva temples and their architectural significance get attraction throughout the country due to the celebrated *Shivalaya Ottam*, nowadays. Even though *Shivalaya Ottam* is a unique spiritual marathan running, lakhs of pilgrims are very eager to participate in it nowadays.

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