

Inscriptions Of Swarna Kaleeswarar Temple at Kalayarkovil

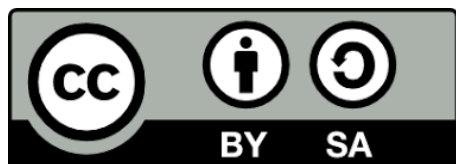
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Abstract: The temple is one of the biggest in this Sivaganga old Ramanathapuram district with imposing towers, Mandapas, etc., It is one of the 14th sacred shrines of Lord Siva in Pandya Nadu which has glorious history dating back to the seventh century C.E The village of Somanathamangalam or Kalayarkovil where this renowned shrine is situated, derives its name from the Kaleeswaram temple of the place, Kalayar is a corruption of the word, Kaleeswaran. During the Sangam period the place was known as Kanapper. which is seen from the 21st verse in the Purananooru, sung by Iyur Moolaikizhar, a poet of the sangam period. In the 9th century C.E. Saint Sundara Moorthy Nayanar described the presiding deity in his devotional songs as kalai. Since then the deity has been known as kalayar, with the Tamil suffix 'yar' added to it, denoting respect.

Keywords: Thirukkaanappaer, Pushpavasiva, Thalaikoli, Dhabas, Kattalais*****



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Introduction

Kalayarkovil temple or Sorna Kaleeswara Temple is dedicated to Hindu God Lord Shiva situated in Kalayar Kovil of Sivagangai District of Tamil Nadu. Kalayarkovil was called **Kaanapair / Thirukkaanappaer.**

Kalayarkovil temple is currently owned by the Sivaganga King family and is now under their management. Kalayarkovil Temple was the stronghold of the rulers of Sivaganga, which was well built with an extensive fort by the Great legendary Maruthu brothers, the Periya Marudhu and Chinna Marudhu, who ruled out Sivagangai Kingdom in the decade of 1800 C.E. Kalayarkovil Temple, is one of the famous 14 Lord Shiva Temples in the Great Pandiya Kingdom.

Kalayarkovil is one of the oldest and largest Lord Shiva temple with three Lord Shiva temples on one roof. These three temples are associated with the three functions of Lord Shiva – creation, preservation, and completion. This temple has three presiding deities Lord Someswara, Lord

Swarnakaleswara and Lord Sundareswara with separate shrines with two majestic Rajagopurams built by Maruthu brothers and Sundara Pandya of the Great Pandya Dynasty.

Inscriptions

The Temple has the Pandya, Ramanathapuram Sethupathis, Sivaganga Samasthana Kings, Marudhu Pandyas and Nattukkottai Nagaratar's contributions. The 5 tier Rajagopuram was built by the 12th Century Varaguna Pandyan (1251 – 1261 C.E).

From the Agananooru a Sangam Literature, Kanaper is the name of the place and Eyil means a strong wall Kanaper was ruled by the King Vengaimarban with safe & strong wall, moat and forest around it. When Vengaimarban challenged, Pandya King Ukra Peruvazhuthi captured the Kanaper with strength. And he was called as "Kanapereyil kadantha Ukra Peruvazhuthi"

As per the inscriptions this place was called as Kanaper and from 16th Century inscription as Kalayarkovil. Lord Shiva was called as Kapaperudaya Nayanar, Kanaperudaya Nayanar Kalayar Somanathar. Ambal was called as Nachiyar Thanmenmulaiyal, Aludaya Nachiyar and Vinayagars Name are added with Chella, Ariya, Sakthi, Ganapathy peruman, etc.

Inscription No.166, ARE.No. 575/1902

Tribhuvanchakravarthi Sundarapandiyan period in the inscription was south wall of the temple, inscription No.166, A.R.No. 575/1902, explained. The news was mentioned in the place of the temple. The land was gifted to the temple of Kanaper by Aghorasiva Mudaliyar alias Vaidyachakravarthi mentions Pushpavasiva. The endowment of Thirumanjanam / sacred bath and Naivedyam by Kizhavan Udaya Perumal Somanathadevar. For which a land 4 ma was gifted to this temple after exempting the Taxes.

These inscriptions were written on 12th and 13th century. The second Pandiya Empire was found in Kalayarkoil inscriptions. Thiripuvana Chakravarthigal Sundara Pandya Deva's 22nd inscription gave more information about this temple and village. Kalayarkoil was in the place of Kanapper. An officer from Chola country bought two separate lands in Thirugnana sambanthanalloor. Somesar gave this land to the temple.¹ The Village Sabha collected these land tax, and they changed it to the temple lands. Using this income, they prepared to conduct poojas. This donation printed on inscription and copper plates, lands were given by Arthanareeswarar. Trees in the garden were given to the temples.

¹ Inscription No.166, ARE 575/1902.

Inscription No.167, ARE.No. 575/1902

Then above Inscription on the west wall, was explained the temple works and donate the land again 2/3 part of the land was given by above Mentioned Brahmin and 1/3 part of the land was given by his brothers.²

Inscription No.168, ARE.No. 576 A/1902

The inscription No.168, ARE 576/1902 the west wall mentioned the same news in Inscription No.167, ARE 575/1902.

Inscription No.169, ARE.No. 577/1902

The above inscription on the east wall of the Hundred Pillars Mandapa in the Kaleeswara temple at Kalayarkoil. Maravarman alias Tribhuvanachakravati Kulasekharadeva, who conquered every country. The land is donated to Devadasi which is also inscribed in this temple. The scale system and the tax system of 13th century were explained so many details also in this inscription.

Pandya King Kulasekara Pandya's 14th year reign inscription (AR 577 of 1902, SII, VIII – 169) records the gift of Lands to the dancers of the temple who are given with title “Thalaikoli”,

² Inscription No.167-168, ARE 575/1902-577/1902.

NakkanCheyyal alias Kalingaraya Thalaikoli, The Land was purchased from the Dancer Nakkan Nachiyar alias Thanianaiyitta Perumal Thalaikoli. The tank/ kulam was rectified and the land was converted to as cultivatable land before gifting. The taxes are also exempted. The land was measured by “Sundarapandiyar Kol” (a measuring scale) and the place was named as Veerapandiyar nallur. From the donated Land the Dancer Kalingaraya Thalaikoli has to give Paddy and money to the temple.

Inscription No.170, ARE.No. 578/1902

The above inscription on the north wall of the kitchen in the same temple Pandya King Veera Pandya's 14th Year reign inscription (AR 578 of 1902, SII,VIII- 170) records the endowment to Aadhi chandeswarar sannadhi by three people, Alalasundara Thirumadam Mudaliyar, Pathiyilarila Nakkan Muvaayira Thalaikoli, Aalasundara Thirumadam.... Sambanda Perumal and chokkan Sambandan towards purchase of land and the payment of grains like Paddy and Varaku and panam 18 to this temple.

Inscription No.171, ARE.No. 579/1902

The above inscription on the north wall of the kitchen in the same temple About the donation of land to the temple in Chaturvedi Mangala village by Setur Nattar and Village people.

Inscription No.172, ARE.No. 580/1902

The above Inscription mentioned, Pandya dynasty, Jadavarman alias Tribhuvana Chakravarti Sundara Pandya deva. The gift of land mentions Aghorasiva and Purpavanasiva. A reference to the cancellation of taxes on the land of Mudaliyar Agora Siva by order of the king, and a reference to Parivatta mariyathai are found.

Inscription No.173, ARE.No. 581 A/1902

The above inscription on the West Wall of Soundaranayake Amman Temple it mentions the news of the grant of land to Perukarunaiyalan and his giving it away to the temple.

Inscription No.174, ARE.No. 581 –B/1902

The above inscription on the West wall of Soundaranayake Amman Temple. It was mentioned that Chedur people had given a gift of land to the temple.

Inscription No.175, ARE.No. 581 –C/1902

The above inscription on the West wall of Soundaranayake Amman Temple without King's name and year records the endowment of Naivedyam of Kariyamuthu, Adaikkaiamuthu, Neiyamuthu, Uppamuthu, Milakamauthu and vasthiram to Kottathu Nachiyar Thanmenmulayar, Aludai Nachiyar, Ariya Pillayar, Chella Pillayar for which the kuruni paddy rice out of which 2

Nazhi Arisi choru to be prepared from the income of the gifted Land. This was donated by the person who constructed the sannadhis.

Inscription No.176, ARE.No. 582/1902

The above inscription on the West wall of Soundaranayake Amman Temple. The inscription without the name of the King records the endowment of Naivedyam and Thirupani to Kamkottathu Alidainachiyar, Thiruveethi Nachiyar, Nayanar Sundarapandyhevar and Azhakiya chokkanar, by three people Thavachakravarthi, Vayiratharayan and Yathavarayan on Vishu and Thirukarthikai functions. The above mentioned temples are built by these three donors. The income from the 50 ma lands measured through **16 jan kol** gifted as Gurudakchina / Devadanam by Vikrama Pandyan. If nothing is yield equivalent amount of money of 2 Achchu, to be given to the Temple.

Inscription No.177, ARE.No. 583/1902

The above inscription on the West wall of Soundaranayake Amman Temple. It is mentioned that the village people gave the land to the temple built by the local traders.

Inscription No.178, ARE.No. 584/1902

The above inscription on the West wall of Soundaranayake Amman Temple. The Sundara

Pandyan's 10th year reign inscription records the gift of Land sale for 30 panam by the Thevan Thongan alias Malava dheventhara Parayan with trees like and wells. This has to be utilized for the pooja in the name of a merchant Mangudayan avudayanPerungarunaiyalan sandhi. When others are signed Malava Theventhara Parayan had placed his thumb impression, since he was not educated. The mistakes are corrected by two persons.

Inscription No.179, ARE.No. 584-A/1902

The above inscription on the West wall of Soundaranayake Amman Temple. It mentioned gift to the land for the temple.

Inscription No.180, ARE.No. 585/1902

The above inscription on the East Wall of Temple. It is mentioned there is a reference to Vanadirayars. Sundara Tholudae Vanathirayan and his son Tirumalirusolai Vanathirayan are also mentioned.

Inscription No.181, ARE.No. 586/1902

The above inscription the south wall entrance to the temple is on the right. it is Veerapandian inscription. it is mentioned about tax cancellation.

Inscription No.182, ARE.No. 587/1902

The above inscription the south wall entrance to the temple is on the left .The inscription without Kings name, records the Ilaiyathangudiyathan, Kulasekarapuraththu, Kalayar, Kavala, peruntheru Thiruvepurudayan Thirumundamazhakiyan, Azhakaiya Konar, Azhakiya Chokkan reconstructed the Madapalli, which was found dilapidated condition on four sides. The required found was taken from the Treasury and for the balance his own fund was used.

An inscription of historical importance which mentions the news that the Pandyans summoned Tulkar from the north. It is known that Thirumadaipalli was destroyed due to the riot of 1511 AD due to the arrival of Tulukka and it was built by a merchant named Dhanma Paribalan.

Inscription No.183, ARE.No. 587-A/1902

The above inscription the south wall entrance to the temple is on the left . The inscription mentioned reconstruction of the Kalanivasaludayan Adaikalangathaar Chidambaranathar Sannadhi and arrange for Naivedyam for which a land was donated.

The other inscriptions mainly records the donation of Lands, Paddy, made to this temple and the trees grown like Neem, Aththi, Pungan, Puli/ Tamarind, Iluppai etc. To our surprise none of the

inscriptions talks about burning of the perpetual lamps or Sandhi Lamp and donation of Cows, goats etc.

During Pandya period a land was gifted to their Guru Dhabasvi Somanathar as Guru Dhatchina / fees. The same Pandya King built the Ambal Temple with cheppu Procession deity, Marudhu brothers constructed the front Mandapa, Temple Chariot, gave 40 Villages and 2 lakhs worth of Gold jewellery to this temple between 1789 to 1794 CE. During recent times an inscription dated to 13th to 14th Century, on a slab stone was found near Vinayagar temple of Kalayarkovil. The inscription is in the form of a song. The Details of the inscription is, even-though the Sanakathi munis learned the literatures and practiced dhabas didn't gained the Gnana. But they gained the real knowledge and Gnana from Lord Shiva as Dakshinamurthy's Chin Mudra.

The 130 feet 9 tier Rajagopuram was built during Marudhu brothers. It was told that Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple Rajagopurams can be seen from this Tallest Rajagopuram, even-though the distance between Kalayarkovil and Madurai is 63 KM, may be seen at horizon. There is a local kummi -song available on this Rajagopuram.

Between -1800 to 1810 C.E this place Kalayarkovil was a battle field between Britishers

and Maruthu Pandiyar. The Britishers declared war against Marudhu brothers for helping Oomathurai, the brother of Veerapandiya Kattabomman to escape from the Palayamkottai Jail and declaring the freedom movement. On 1st Oct 1801C.E, Marudhu brothers moved their 78000 soldiers towards the Kalayarkovil, to recover the Kalayarkovil and the temple, which was captured by the Britishers. During the war Chinna Marudhu was suffered with a bullet injury on his thigh and surrendered. Periya marudhu was forced to surrender. (If not surrendered Britishers threatened to demolish the Rajagopuram). All the family members along with Marudhu brothers were taken to Tirupattur. When they were asked their last wish, Marudhu brothers wants them to be buried in front of the Temple Rajagopuram, All the orders they issued by them both in written and verbal, as gifts to be continued and the same should be carried out with immediate effect. The Carnal Agni had assured to carry out and hanged about 500 people which includes all their family members and soldiers on 24th October 1901 C.E. Marudhu brothers were brought dead with heads cut state after three days ie on 27th October 1901 C.E. As per their last wish they were buried in front of the Temple Rajagopuram on the same street. The temple thirupani and Neerazhi mandapam was built by Devakottai Jamin family.

Now the temple is under the control of Sivaganga Samasthanam.

There are some stone inscriptions in this temple dated 1530 and 1532 A.D. record the gifts of lands by Sundara Tholudayar Mavali Vandarayar.³ The stone statues of Kizhavan Sethupathy and Rani Velu Nachiar and Maruthu brothers are seen inside the temple. An elephant is also maintained by the Devasthanam authorities. The statue of Sivagangai king Muthuvaduganatha Thevar is in front of the Arulmigu Someswarar Sannathi. This temple maintains a number of Kattalais.

In Kalayarkoil there are some inscriptions of Pandya kings like Jatavarman Sundara Pandya, Vira Pandya and Kulasekara.⁴ Kanapper, its fort which figures among those of the strongholds taken by a Ceylon general in succession for the Pandyan throne in the sixties of the twelfth century.⁵ During the period of Madurai Sultanate it had, probably another name that is Jyothishkudi, made up of 'Jyoti' and 'Kudi'. Possibly the place was surrounded by Jyotismati trees. The

Vaishnavites of Srirangam who were harassed during the Muslim occupation in Srirangam made this their 'Anjinan Pukalidam' or asylum, until Gopana, the General of Kumara Kampana II, destroyed the Muslim occupation in Srirangam and reinstalled Lord Ranganatha in the temple.³¹⁰ Kalayarkoil is the place in which fugitives under Pillai Lokacharya took the Ranganatha image from Srirangam for safety and where the Acharya died.⁶ In 1451 Sundarathol Vanathirayan, a descendent of Pandyan king through Abirami a dancing girl of Kalayarkoil, administered this place.⁷ There are the inscriptions of this temple narrating, Sundarathol Vanathirayan was giving grants to the temples. He built a Vinayagar temple near the Kaleeswarar temple.⁸ From 1604 to 1621, Kalayarkoil and Pattamangalam are mentioned among Sadaikka Thevar's territorial annexations. Sadaikka Thevar died in 1621 and followed by his eldest son Koothan Setupathi brought those territories under his control. Peddanna Nayaka Thevar was an illegitimate son of Sadaikka Thevar and he was in charge of Kalayarkoil at that time.⁹ During the period of Chokkanatha Nayak of Madurai, Kalayarkoil remained as a territory under his

³ Ibid, ARE 587/1902

⁴ K.V. Subramania Aiyar,(ed.), op,cit, Vol.IV. A.R. 575 to 584 of 1902, pp.76-89.

⁵ S. Krishnawami Ayyangar, Sources of Vijayanagar History, Madras, 1919, p.38.

⁶ S.Thiruvenkatachari, op.cit, p.166.

⁷ S.Krishnaswami Ayyangar, op.cit, p.35.

⁸ A. Krishnaswami, The Tamil Country Under Vijayanager, Annamalainagar, 1964, p.117.

⁹ K.V.Subramania Ayer, (ed.), op.cit, pp.89-90.

control.¹⁰ Kizhavan Setupathi brought Ramanathapuram, Samasthanam alias Maravar Seemai under his control. He took many steps for the glorification of the temple. There is a statue of Kilavan Setupathi even today which speaks of many services rendered by him for the welfare of the temple.¹¹ During the regime of Kizhavan Setupati, his minister Kumara Pillai was tortured at that time. John de Britto, one of the Christian missionaries in the South, made a sojourn at Kalayarkoil. John de Britto and his followers were dragged ten miles to Kalayarkoil and imprisoned in a small room near the entrance of the Kaleeswarar temple in Kalayarkoil.¹² In 1730, Sivagangai Seemai was founded by Sasivarna Thevar who became the first ruler of Sivagangai Seemai. Sasivarna Peria Udaya Thevar died in the year of 1750 and was succeeded by his son Muthuvaduganatha Peria Udaya Thevar. During his regime Maruthu Brothers played a prominent role.¹³ Thereafter Kalayarkoil made its genesis as historically important place.

¹⁰ S.Thiruvengkatachari, op.cit, p.20. 315 Ibid.p.20. 316 Ibid, p.21.

¹¹ Sathyanatha Iyer, History of Nayaks of Madurai, Madras, 1924, p.159.

¹² R. Nirmaladevi, (ed.), Pana Vitu Tutu, Madras, 1980, P.X.

¹³ K.V. Subramaniyan, Thirty copper Plate No.1.

Conclusion

The Swarna Kaleeswarar temple of Kalayarkovil, from the ancient period Kaleeswarar Temple is an important saivaite centre. The importance of Kalayarkovil lies in the location of three shrines namely Someswarar, Kaleeswarar and Sundareswarar and their consorts Soundaranayaki, Swarnavalli and Meenakshi respectively. Pandiya's made elaborate contribution to the Kaleeswarar Temple. Vanathirayas, Kilavan Sethupathi and Maruthu Brothers made praiseworthy contributions to this temple. The early Zamindars of Sivaganga had donated a number of villages for the maintenance of this temple. At present, Nattukkottai Chettiyars are about the upkeep of this temple. In early days under the Pandya and Chola rules, the temples and their properties were managed by the village assemblies through special committees called Variyam.

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