

# Vestiges of Thirunallur

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## ABSTRACT

The village Thirunallur is lying on the southern bank of river Cauvery, located in Kumbakonam taluk, Thanjavur District. Thirunallur is also known as *Dakshina Kailasam*. The place Nallur had its glorified antique history from the Sangam age which revealed through the literary evidences and archaeological sources such as lithic records and monuments. Tirugnana Sambanthar sang hymns in praise of the place as follows:

*“Narrum malarpoikai Nallur”*

*“Nannum punnal veli Nallur”*

*Thinna malarum Paiyumpozhillum vayalum sulntha thirunallur”*

This elucidates the prosperity and vicinity of the place. In the Chola lithic record the village was refer to *“Panchavan Mahadevi Chaturvedimangalam”* and *“Nithavinotha Vada Nattu Nallur”*. Presently the village is called as Nallur or Thirunallur. The village is adorned with Devara Siva sthala called Kalyana Sundaresar temple belongs to early Chola period. This temple was glorified by Tirugnana Sambanthar, Tirunavukkarasar (Appar) and Sundarar and Arunagirinathar. The temple had nearly twenty three epigraphs assigned to various dynasties viz Cholas, Hoysalas and Vijayanagar Period. This article will focus the significance of the place Thirunallur and brought the vestiges of this site to lime light.

## INTRODUCTION

The village Thirunallur is lying on the southern bank of river Cauvery, located in Kumbakonam taluk, Thanjavur District. Thirunallur is also known as *Dakshina Kailasam*. The village was filled with natural scenic which was reveals from the following quotes viz:

*“Thiruvamar thamaraiyum, chirvalar sengalunirum,*

*neythalum, kuravum, senbagamum, kondraiyum,*

*vanniyum nirainthathu maadammali maraiyor nallur”<sup>1</sup>*

Tirugnana Sambanthar sang hymns in praise of the place as follows:

*“Narrum malarpoikai Nallur”*

*“Nannum punnal veli Nallur”*

*Thinna malarum Paiyumpozhillum vayalum sulntha thirunallur”<sup>2</sup>*

This elucidates the prosperity and vicinity of Thirunallur. Even today the village endures with similar picturesque by filled with elongated trees and greenish farm environment in which the village Nallur is embellished on the core.

### **Toponymy**

The village was variously called as Nallur, Thirunallur, Nallur nadu, *Panchavan Mahadevi Chaturvedimangalam* and *Nithavinotha Vada Nattu Nallur*. The term Thirunallur seems to have been derived from “Thiru+ Nal+Ur”. In Tamil Country the villages which were associated with divinity had begins with name “Thiru”. Thus Nallur, which enclosed by divinity is called Thirunallur. The word ‘nal’ refer to the quality. The land of Tamil country during the Sangam Age witnessed such five-fold division viz., *Kurunji* (hilly), *Mullai* (forest) *Marudham* (Plain), *Neidhal* (coastal) and *Palai* (desert). Among this land divisions the *Marutham* land was consider as suited for habitation site.<sup>3</sup> Thus the word ‘Ur’ refers to Marutha land habitation. It is construed that Nallur is one of the habitation site on Marutham landscape.

The Village was called as Nallur nadu, it connotes generally the territory within the ambit of a “sovereign”. According to Burton stein, it refers to agricultural land in contrast to *Kadu* and is designated to the micro region.<sup>4</sup> However, Y. Subbarayalu opines that the *Nadu* stood as the territorial cum administrative nit during the Chola period.<sup>5</sup> Despite the different views propounded, the *Nadus* having played both as the territorial units and administrative bodies at the local level. Thus It acted as an territorial division called Nallur Nadu.

Thirunallur under study was also called as “*Panchavan Mahadevi Chaturvedimangalam*” in the fifteenth regnal year lithic record of Chola king Rajaraja I perhaps after the name of *Panchavan Mahadevi*, queen of Rajaraja I, the word *Chaturvedimangalam* had its root from Sanskrit word “*Chatur*” means four, “*vedi*” means the person well versed in Vedas and “*Mangalam*” means the village. Thirunallur was a *brahmadeya* settlement.<sup>6</sup> Further, it is gleaned from a lithic record of Hoysala ruler Vira Ramanatha Deva, that the village was also named after the surname of Chola King Rajaraja I as ‘*Nithavinotha Vada Nattu Nallur*.. Presently the village is called as Nallur or Thirunallur.<sup>7</sup>

### **Political History of Nallur**

The place Nallur had its glorified antique history from the Sangam age which revealed through the literary evidences and archaeological sources such as lithic records and monuments. During Sangam period Nallur was served as part of Nallur nadu. Territorial divisions of Sangam Chola. The Cholas lost their supremacy under the Kalabhras, Pallavas and First Pandyas. During their subordinate position, the Cholas might have ruled as petty chieftains, with Palayarai as their home land. As Nallur was part of Palayari, Nallur was subsisting under the rule of Kalabharas, Then Pallavas came to the forefront in the political arena after defeating the Kalabhras. A lithic record of Pallava king Nirupathungavaruman found at Kesava Perumal Temple in chenglepet district refer to payment given to Aditya Sharma, inhabitant of Nallur.<sup>8</sup> In Seventh and eighth century the Village was also sanctified by Saiva Nayanmars Tirugnana Sambanthar, Tirunavukkarasar (Appar) and Sundarar. Thus lithic record and literature confirms that the village under Pallava hegemony. After Pallavas, Tamil country was overrun by Imperial Cholas. When the Pallavas and Pandyas were engaged in war, Vijayalaya Chola captured Thanjavur from Muttaraiyars and made it his capital. This evidenced that this village Nallur also undergone the rule of Muttaraiyars. Then Nallur became prominent under Imperial Cholas, as the village was existed under *Mummudi Chola mandalam* which reveals, the village enjoyed the status of township. The epigraphic reference of Hoyasala from here ensures the village was under their hegemony. After the downfall of Cholas, the village was also undergone the rule Later Pandyas, Vijayanagar, Nayaks, Maratiyar, and finally under Europeans. After independence, presently it is situated in Kumbakkonam taluk, Thanjavur District.

## Inscriptions

The temple had nearly twenty three epigraphs, twenty two assigned to Cholas and one pertains to Hoysalas. As far as Chola lithic records are concerned the earliest lithic record pertains to Uttama Chola, one belongs to Rajaraja I, another two belongs to Rajathiraja II, yet another one belongs to Kulothuga III, two lithic records belongs to Rajaraja III and two inscription pertains to Rajendra III and finally one unnamed inscription. A lithic record dated in tenth regnal year of Uttama Chola refers to an enquiry into the *Srikarya* that is temple affairs under the order of the king by a person named Manakkurrai Viranarayananar.<sup>9</sup> Fifteenth regnal year lithic record of Rajaraja I denoted the construction of *mandapa* by Narayanan Elaviran of Nallur.<sup>10</sup> Two lithic records Rajathiraja II one dated in the eleventh regnal year mentions gift of land for offerings and another dated in the thirteenth regnal year records gift of 200 *kasu* for burning two lamps.<sup>11</sup> A lithic record of Kulottunga III cited the gift of land.<sup>12</sup>

There are fourteen inscriptions pertains to Rajaraja III, one dated in the fourth regnal year refers to the gift of land to the temple.<sup>13</sup> Four inscriptions dated in his fifth regnal year refers to gift of lamp to the Nallur Temple by chief Vanakovarayar. Another inscription mentions gift of money for burning lamp and lamp stand by the same chief. Another two inscriptions registers a sale of house site, a garden, and eight coconut trees for the temple of Agambadi-Vinayaka-Pillayar.<sup>14</sup> Fourteenth regnal year lithic records land transaction that is a sale of temple land to feudatory called Ponnar Rajan alias Villiramasingadeva of Pandimandalam.<sup>15</sup> Twenty first and twenty third regnal year inscription mentions the gift of land for supplying a garland of red lilies.<sup>16</sup> Twenty fourth regnal year lithic record elucidates the list of all tax free lands benefited by the temple.<sup>17</sup> Twenty fifth regnal year inscription records gift of *matha*[*Ashram*] to the teacher called Tattanudaiya-Isanadeva, by lady disciple in accordance with the instruction of her husband, it also mentions additional gift of land to the same *matha*.<sup>18</sup> Twenty sixth regnal year refers to gift of land for daily offerings (*Nithavinotham*).<sup>19</sup> Two inscriptions dated in twenty Ninth regnal year refers to gift of paddy for offerings and land for offerings to the temple of Thirunallur.<sup>20</sup> Thirtyth regnal year records the lands transaction, sale of land to the temple by a native of Killiyur in *Pandiyakulasani valanadu* and in continuation with this inscription another one dated in the second regnal year of the same king, records a gift of land for burning lamp to the temple of Thirunallur Nayanar.<sup>21</sup>

There are two inscriptions pertains to Rajendra III, one dated in the fourth regnal year reveals the gift of land clubbed together in certain specified name called *Manukulamedutta Perumal* and another inscription dated in the fifth regnal year elucidates the gift of land to construct ceiling of the temple.<sup>22</sup> Finally one unnamed chola inscription dated in twenty third regnal year mentions a gift of lamp to the temple of Ilankoil Mahadeva.<sup>23</sup> A lithic record in the twenty third regnal year, belongs to Hoysala ruler Viraramanathadeva records gift of land by Aghoradeva to the Nallur Temple.<sup>24</sup>

## Legends associated with Nallur

Thiruallur is the place where Lord Siva presides Kalyana Sundaresar temple Purana to his younger son Muruga.<sup>25</sup> Another legend correlated with the Nallur was during the fight between Vayu and Adishesan, the later one placed the one piece Kailasa on Thirunallur. The peak is called by the name 'Sundaragiri' and 'Thenkailayam' (South Kailaya). Appar glorified this peak as "Vadapaal kailaiyum, thenpaal Nallurum"<sup>26</sup>

Another belief was in Thiruallur Brahma worshipped Siva and get rid of his sin. Likewise Devas also worshipped Siva and received his preaching's to attain the endless happiness. Yet another the Puranic version related with the place was Vishnu got the incarnation of Narashima by meditating in Thirunallur in order to kill the cruel demon Iranniyahan. The white elephant of Indra, Iravatham get rid of the Curse it got from Indra.

Sage Agastya witnessed Siva Parvathi wedding in mount Kailasa from Thirunallur.<sup>27</sup> Finally, Thirunallur is the place; Siva tested the devotion of Amaranethi Nayanar and filled him with his blessing.<sup>28</sup> It is believed that Thirunallur is the place associated with the Puranic annotations.

## Temple

The village is adorned with Devara Siva Sthala called Kalyana Sundaresar temple or Panchanarneswarar Temple belongs to early Chola period. This temple was glorified by Tirugnana Sambanthar, Tirunavukkarasar (Appar) and Sundarar and Arunagirinathar. Kalyana Sundaresar temple dedicated to Lord Siva and in epigraphs he was called by the name Thirunallur Udaiya Nayanar, Ilankoil Mahadevar and Mahadeva. It is the 137<sup>th</sup> *Devara sthala*. It is the 20<sup>th</sup> Siva sthala in southern bank of river Cauvery and 120<sup>th</sup> sthala in northern bank of river Cauvery in Chola Nadu.

Kalyana Sundaresar temple exists from Sangam Period, as *Tirukarrali*. According to temple *sthalapurana* this temple was built by Ko Sengan Chola of Sangam period.<sup>29</sup> Though the earliest inscription in the temple pertains to Uttama Chola, it is construed that it was built during the time of Uttama Chola. The temple is in a raised platform of *Madakoil* type with Dravidian architecture. The main deity dedicated to Kalyana Sundaresar is Suyambu form of Linga changes its colour into copper (Thamiram), light red, molten gold, green and unknown colour five times a day with in the interval of two hour and twenty four minutes.<sup>30</sup> Yet another notable feature noted at Nallur temple was the paintings with natural colors on *garbagraha* belongs to Vijayanagara period. The painting portrays Naradar playing a Veena, artiste holding a pair of cymbals, moon and Skanda holding a lotus.<sup>31</sup> Another notable feature of the temple is bronze image of lord Nataraja also called *Sabhpathi* embellished with eight hands and dancing on the head of an *Asura* (demon) is a fine piece of workmanship. This is probably one of the *Navathandavam* or the nine dancing aspect of Siva. Yet another important feature found in Thirunallur is surrounded by the holy water called *tirtha such as Sapthasagaram, Saptha Tirtha, Nagakani Tirtha, Darma Tirtha, Deva Tirtha, Brahma Tirtha, Iravatha Tirtha, Surya Tirtha, Kanni Tirtha and Kaveri Tirtha*<sup>32</sup>

## END NOTES

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