

# GLIMPSES OF VILLIANUR OF PUDUCHERRY FROM THE LIGHT OF EPIGRAPHICAL SOURCES

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## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe the history of Villianur with the help of epigraphical sources. Villianur is located ten Kilometers away from the south west of Puducherry on the Puducherry – Viluppuram highway road. Villianur one of the sacred Saivaite centre is called after the name of Villva trees which is otherwise known as Vilvanur.

**Key words :** Villianur, Chola Inscriptions, Pandya Inscriptions

## Introduction

Villianur contains the words Villvam and Ur, Villanur denotes Villvam trees and Ur means Village. In ancient times Villianur was surrounded by the Vilva trees. Hence this place was called as Vilvanallur and then became Villianur. It is on the western bank of river of Mutharu and also in the lower valley of Mutharu<sup>1</sup>. Villianur is situated in the gride  $11^{\circ} - 45' - 12^{\circ}$  North Latitude and  $79^{\circ} - 37' = 79^{\circ} - 50'$  east Longitude<sup>2</sup> Villianur covers a total area of 5.6 square Kilometer<sup>3</sup>. Forty four inscriptions found in the Sri Thirukamiswarar temple contain many interesting details regarding the political vicissitudes through which the Villianur. From them Villianur had continuously played a dominant role in the history of erst while TamilNadu and that its possession was converted by the successive dynasties of Kings. These epigraphs belonging to the dynasties like Pallavas, Later Cholas, Later Pandyas, Vijayanagar rulers besides the various smaller dynasties like the Kadavarayers and the Sumbuvarayers clearly indicate the eventful variations in the political fortunes of Villianur. There are also a few epigraphs of the post Vijayanagar period many of which do not mention the reigning dynasty probably because the political pendulum was swinging too fast one of them, however belongs to the Nawab of carnatic under whose control came the Villianur area in the beginning of the

eighteenth century. These epigraphs can indeed be said to epitomize the history of the Tondaimandalam region of which Villianur was the most important town. The inscriptional evidences are quite substantial upto the end of the Vijayanagar empire subsequent to that period have only a few stray epigraphs, the latest dated A.D. 1880. From 1676 – 1954 A.D. Villianur was ruled by French. In 1954 Karikal, Magi, Enam and Puducherry including Villianur became the part of Indian Union. Villianur and Tirukamiswarar temple was undoubtedly in existence during the Pallava times as attested by the Devaram hymns of Appar.

In the last quarter of ninth century the Cholas under the dynamic leadership of Aditya I decisively defeated the Pallavas and Pandyas and established their swamy over Tondaimandalam including Villianur. RajaRaja I Captured entire Thondaimandalam including Villianur and Changed its name as Jeyemkonda Cholamandalam<sup>4</sup>. Villianur was situated in Mathurunadu of RajaRajavalanattu JeyamkondaCholamandalam. RajaRajavalanadu consists of twenty four nadus including Mathurnadu otherwise known as Veeravatharavalanadu<sup>5</sup>. Mathurunadu consists of Villianur, irumbai, Punguntram, Petuvellari and Olukkarai<sup>6</sup>. Mathur is situated twenty kilometers north west of Villianur. Mathurnadu consists of the one portion of present Villuppuram taluk and South West Portion of Puducherry district. RajaRaja Cholas thirteenth regnal year 998 A.D. inscription found at Abiramasathu in Thiruvathur of Villuppuram taluk<sup>7</sup>, mention one Govarthana Giramavithan son of Mahadever one among the Village council member of Vidavidugusathurvedimangalam alias Villianur donated gold to the lord of Tiruvamuthur for conducting milkabishegam<sup>8</sup>. Vidavidugu is one among the special title of the Pallava rulers.

Three inscriptions of Kulotunga I are found in the Tirukamiswarar temple of Villianur from 10<sup>th</sup> year to 55<sup>th</sup> year<sup>9</sup>. His epigraphs are also found in other temples of Villianur and its neighbor hoods like Abiramatchera Siva temple of Mathur, Mahadevar temple of Ariyur and Siva temple of Valuthavur<sup>10</sup>. Kulotunga II<sup>nd</sup> (1133 – 1150) inscription found on the western entrance of the temple<sup>11</sup>. One epigraph of Kulottunga III (1178 – 1216) found on the northern wall of the Ardhamandapa of Thirukamiswarar temple<sup>12</sup>. Under Kopperunjinga (1243 – 1278) the Kadaval power rose to a position of Independent power. In 1248 A.D. he sway over Thondaimandala including Villianur. Kopperunjingas fifth regnal year 1248 A.D. inscription found on the states of Kumudapadi in the Natarasar shrine of Thirukamiswarar temple<sup>13</sup> and sixth<sup>14</sup> and eighth regnal year inscriptions of the same king found on the Southern wall of Ardhamandapa<sup>15</sup>. Sixth regnal year 1341 A.D. inscription of Parakiramapandya found on the

South wall of Mahamandapa of Tirukamiswarar temple<sup>16</sup>. Another inscription of the Same King found on the same place<sup>17</sup>. Rajanarasima Sambuvarrayas (1337 A.D.) 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup> regnal year inscriptions are found in Thirukamiswarar temple<sup>18</sup>.

In his southern expedition in 1361 A.D. Kumarakampana was ably assisted by two General as namely Gopanna and Saluvamangu. 1370 A.D. inscription of Saluvamangu found on the south wall of Mahamandapa of Tirukamiswarar temple mention that Saluvamangu deva Mahajana donated 12 ma lands in Olukalarai to Thiru Kamiswarar temple<sup>19</sup>. Two inscriptions of Ariyana Udaya I found on the south wall of Palliyarai related to the 1379 A.D.<sup>20</sup>. The first inscription mention about the donation of ten Ma land to the Thiru Kamiswarar temple. Another inscription describes about the donation of Five Hundred Kuli lands to the Thirukamiswarar temple by one Vaniyan Malai Pillai alias Thennatterian of Ulanthai to lit the Thirunantha lamp. In 1318 A.D. inscription of AriyenaUdayar found on the east wall of Mahamandapa mention about the donation provided by the AriyenaUdyar II to conduct the Therthavari festival to the Tirukamisvaran in the Panguni Thirunalday. The above donation amount collected from the tax levied on the cattle's viz.,  $\frac{1}{2}$  money on cow,  $\frac{3}{4}$  money on she buffallo, quarter money on he buffallo  $\frac{1}{2}$  money for sheep<sup>21</sup>. Two inscriptions of Savana Maharaja related to the 1387 A.D. and 1399 A.D. found on the East wall of Mahamandapa of Thiru. Kamiswarar temple mention about the donation of Kani dry and Wet land taxes, fish pond tax, Chekku tax and sixty Panams to the Kamiswarar temple to conduct the Adi Festival by Savana deva Maharaja<sup>22</sup>. Virupaksha II (1465 – 1485) inscription related to the 1472 A.D. found on the north wall of the Ardhamandapa of Thiru Kamiswarar temple mention about the donation of land at Cholanallur alias Vannarakkallai to the Tirukamiswarar at Villianur by Kattari Saluvanaresinga Udayar, Mahamandaleswara of Tondai mandalam<sup>23</sup>. Two inscriptions of Achutadevaraya (1530 – 1542) younger brother of Krishnadeva Raya (1509 – 1530) found on the South Wall of Thirumkamiswarar temple related to the 1532 A.D. and 1536 A.D.<sup>24</sup>. Another inscription of Achyutaraya found on the northern side of the eastern entry of second Prakara<sup>25</sup>. Ninth regnal year 1542 A.D. inscription of Sadasivaraya (1542 – 1576) found on the East wall of Mahamandapa. Fourth regnal year 1575 A.D. inscription of Sriranga I (1572 – 1586) found on the north wall of Mahamandapa of Thirukamiswarar temple. One inscription of Venkata II (1586 – 1614 A.D.) found on the east wall of east Gopura and inner sides of the Vinayagar temple.

In 1645 Sri Renga III retired to Tirupati and that was end of Vijayanagar Kingdom. The Political confusion uncertainty that prevailed in the region was probably the reason for the paucity of inscriptions of this time at Thirukamiswarar temple. Even in a few of these that occur the usual mention of the reigning King is omitted. For example in Telugu epigraph dated 17<sup>th</sup> Century found on the north wall of Mahamandapa of Thirukamiswarar temple. The name of ruling or dynasty is omitted<sup>26</sup>. But this epigraph is valuable in so far as it mentions, the trouble times through which temple passed. It records that one Padmanabha made some Sriseva to the temple is running the administration during the difficult times of Muslim invasion. The reference is obviously the incurious of the Golkonda forces. Even inscription of this temple dated A.D. 1765 do not mention the ruling King<sup>27</sup>.

The above said inscriptions confirmed the ruling dynasties from Pallava, Cholas, Later Pandya, Kedavar, Sambuvarayas and Vijayanagar rulers.

#### END NOTES

- 1 Venkatesan, N. (1979), Varalaatril Villianur (Tamil), Chennai, p.28.
- 2 Thillaivanam, S. (1988), Puducherry Manila Varalaru, Pondicherry, p.5.
- 3 Directorate of Census operation (pub) District census Hand Book, Part XII-B, Puducherry, 2011, p.24.
- 4 South Indian Inscription (S.I.I.) Vol.VII, No. 188.
- 5 S.I.I., Vol.VII, Nos. 5 and 10.
- 6 S.I.I., Vol.V, No. 989.
- 7 S.I.I., Vol.VIII, Nos. 816 and 817.
- 8 S.I.I., Vol.VIII, No. 748.
- 9 Annual Report on Indian Epigraphy (ARE.) 1936-1937, Vol.II, Nos. 1-3.
- 10 Tiruppuvanai inscription, No. 8.
- 11 ARE., 1936 – 1937, Vol.II, No. 4.
- 12 S.I.I., Vol.VII, No. 816.
- 13 ARE., 1939 – 1937, No. 199.
- 14 ARE., 1936 – 1937, No. 198.
- 15 ARE., 1936 – 1937, Vol.II, No.185.
- 16 ARE., 1936 – 1937, Vol.II, No.189.
- 17 ARE., 1936 – 1937, Vol.II, No.187.
- 18 ARE., 1936 – 1937, Nos. 188, 190, and 192.
- 19 ARE., 1936 – 1937, No. 191.
- 20 ARE., 1936 – 1937, No. 194.
- 21 ARE., 1936 – 1937, Nos. 183 and 184.
- 22 ARE., 1936 – 1937, Nos. 195 – 196.
- 23 Epigraphia Indica (E.I.) Vol.II, p.79, S.I.I., Vol.VII, No.815.

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- <sup>24</sup> ARE., 1936 – 1937, Nos. 188 and 182.  
<sup>25</sup> ARE., 1936 – 1937, No. 201.  
<sup>26</sup> ARE., 1936 – 1937, No. 197.  
<sup>27</sup> ARE., 1936 – 1937, No.205.

