

# VEDAPURI MANNARKOVIL SRI RAJAGOPALA SWAMY TEMPLE IN AMBASAMUDRAM - A STUDY

V.Manikandasethupathy,  
Ph.D Research Scholar,  
Department of History,  
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University,  
Tirunelveli , TamilNadu.

## Abstract

Mannarkovil is a village near Ambasamudram, Tirunelveli district. Kulasekara Azhwar spent the last 30 years of his life at this 1000-year-old Mannar Kovil and is said to have attained moksham here. One sees several inscriptions in this historical temple dating back to the Chozha Period. Located 40 km West of Tirunelveli near Ambasamudram on the banks of two rivers, Tamaraiparani and Karuna River, is the huge 1000-year-old three-tiered Rajagopalaswamy Kulasekara Perumal Koil in Mannarkovil. Recently the annual Thirupavitrotsvam was conducted in a grand manner in this Hevilambi varusham, Avani month. Several astikas in and around this temple participated in the event and received the blessings of Sri Rajagopala Swamy and Sri Kulasekara Azhwar. Kulasekara Perumal Koil in Mannar Koil Kulasekara Azhvaar spent the last 30 years of his life at this 1000-year-old Mannar Koil and is said to have attained Moksham here One sees several inscriptions in this historical temple dating back to the Chozha Period.

Keywords: *Temple, Kovil, Rajalagopalaswamy, mannarkovil, Kulasekara Azhwar*

## INTRODUCTION

The temple is located in an elevated land of the village. This temple is surrounded by a beautiful ever green landscape of natural resources. This temple was archaically known as vedapuri, mediavally rajendra vinnagar and mannarkoil at present. This abode of lord Vishnu called vedapuri was glorified at par with thiruvanangam ranganatha swamy temple located at the bank of river Cautery. The temple at vedapuri is located on the banks of river thamirabarani on its southern side and kadana river on its northern side. The village presently known as mannarkoil is adored and acclaimed by the people only due to this temple. Vedapur was the part of mullioned before thousand years. Raja simha chera of chera dynasty erected this beautiful temple at vedapuri. Later on Veda purl was part of an autonomous state under the control of chola emperor ranjendra chola. Then this temple was called rajendra vinnagan and the deity was worshiped in the name of vinnagan perumal. In the later period only the deity of this temple came to be called raja gopala swamy. There are many wonderfull sculpture in this temple. The temple is very ancient from mythological era to the period of twelve vaishnavita saints and spiritual masters known as azhwars and acharyar respectively the deity of sanctum sanctorum in this temple is sri vela narayanar coupled with his consort sri bhoomi and sri ncela.

The festivals deity of this temple is sri rajagopala swamy coupled with sri andal goddess vedawalli and bhuvana valli are the deities of separate sanctum sanctorum of this temple. The lord vedanarayanar bestows his graceful blessings to the devotees is standing sitting a lying position under the towering roof called ashtanga vimana. The history of this holy shrine says that the supreme cosmic being make his divine manifestation in response to asceticism penance and prayers of the great sagas pruger and markandeya.

## OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The principal purpose of spirituality is to elevate the human life. Temples are the basis for the spiritual Metaphysics. Our prime objective is to propagate and preserve the uniqueness of our archaic temples. A part from being the symbol of spirituality and ancient architecture, temples had been fortification at war times with secret tunnels for the King and his family to get the safer place and treasuries. This temple is also such an ancient temple established by great sages and renovated later in different period by king of chera, chozha Nayak and vijayanakar dynasties.

## HYPOTHESIS

- ❖ The study is based on the blowing Hypothesis.
- ❖ What was the reason for the name Mannar Koil Sri Rajakopala Swamy Sri Kulasekara Azhwar Temple
- ❖ What are the architectural contribution of Mannar Koil Sri Rajakopala Swamy Sri Kulasekara Azhwar Temple
- ❖ How to administrate the Mannar Koil Sri Rajakopala Swamy Sri Kulasekara Azhwar Temple
- ❖ What were the important festivals celebrated in Mannar Koil Sri Rajakopala Swamy Sri Kulasekara Azhwar Temple

## HISTORY OF TEMPLE

Once the three Manifestation of Supreme cosmic being such as Lord Sri Maha Vishnu, Lord shiva and Lord Brahma decide to save people from the clutches of antipeople and anti divine evil being called Asuras. Being afraid of facing the three Devine Beings, the Asuras fled away and took asylum at the hermitage or Ashram of the great sage Peiugu. Then the sage peiugu was not present there. His consort and disciple only were available there. Peiugu's RishiPathni-letter, half did not obey the order of the Hindu Triad or Hindi Trinity to handover them the asuras sheltered in the hermitage. Enraged Lord Vishnu took her life using His spinning, dislike weapon sudarshan chakra. Thereafter The Hindu Trinity annihilated all the asuras sheltered in the hermitage. Getting back to his hermitage, the sage peiugu learnt that his consort was slain by lord sri maha Vishnu sage peiugu because so furious and cursed lord Vishnu that He would also experience the agony of losing the life of His consort as how peiugu was undergoing melancholia. Having come to understand that his spouse had committed an inexcusable blunder by sheltering the asuras in his hermitage and refusing to hand over them to the Hindu Trinity.

## RISHIS AGE

The deities of Mannar koil temple were installed by the sages peiugu and Markandeya. To answer the The prayer and penance of these Narayana Perumal Sri devi and Sri Bhoo devi. sages, Lord Vishnu blessed them with his divine Presence in the form of idols installed over these by these sages. The sage Peiugu and Markandeya worshiped the deities in the temple by the names of Sri Veda Narayana Perumal and Sri Bhoo devi.

## PERIOD OF VAISHNAVITE SAINTS:

Sri Kula sekana Azhwar is regarded as an important Vashnavite saint among the twelve Azhwars. Sri Kula Sekana Azhwan is the only Vaishnavite saint called with the surname perumal of Lord Vishnu as Sri Kula Saekara perumal.

Kula Sekara Alwan came to the earth as an incanation from the divine abode sari Vaikunda spiritual Universe on l'una l'iriarn Star ythe auspicious day of punan pusam star, the 7<sup>th</sup> loran astenism at Thiruvamchikalam in Chera kingdom, the present kerala Kulasekara Perumal was an emperor ruling a great kingdom by annexing various small kingdom through military power. With his devotion to Lord Vishnu, removining all the worldly pleasures of being a great emperor; Kulasekara Perumal and crowning his son as emperor of his kingdom Kulasekara Perumal went on pilgrimage to all holy shrine of lord Vishnu in the great nation भारत. Kulassekara perumal came to worship lord vedanarayana in mannarkoil. Kulasekara perumal heard a formless divine voice from the spiritual planet he was asked to serve lord veda narayana of mannar koil throughout his life time through the celestial voice of the supreme formless cosmic divine being accordingly kulasekara azhvar spent his remaining life time in this mannarkoli shrine serving lord veda narayana with keep meditating and devotion towards lord Vishnu kulasekara alwar attained the holy feet of lord Vishnu at this mannar koil shrine where he has a magnificent temple. Kulasekara alwar has composed several devotional poems on lord Vishnu in

tamil and Sanskrit. His tamil devotional verses have been compiled in the name of perumal thirumozhi and Sanskrit verses in the name of mukunda mala.

## **KINGS PERIOD**

This temple was renovated several times at various period of chera, chola and pandya kings. Rajendra chola of chola dynasty. Undertook many renovation works in the temple. In praise of rajendra chola, the temple shrine came to be called rajendra vinnagar. The temple was offered with huge lands by chera king raja simha chera king rajendra simha undertook renovation works in this temple during the period of 1024CE. Jatavarma sundara chola pandya donated large lands to the temple. The outer mandapa was erected to the temple during the period of Nayak kings. The temple shrine, mannar koil; is the birth place of vari kesari sri Azhagira manavala Jeeyar who is well known for his scholiastry "Panniradarjadi" of Nalayira Dluivya Prapandham.

## **CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE**

Mannar koil region was once under the administration of chera king Raja simha in the name of simha in the name of mullinadu as an autonomous part of chozha dynasty ruled by Rajendra chozhal. Then mannar koil was the capital of mullinadu this state was also known as Raja Raja chaturvedi Mangalam.

The Western Ghat was the western and southern frontier of Raja Raja Chera mahadevi and Athalanallur on its eastern boundary. The temple of principal deity lord veda three part in order to house the idols of lord vedanarayanar in sitting, standing and lying positions by chera king Rajasimha during the period of 1024CE. As chera king Raja Simha was ruling his mullinadu under the control of Rajendra chozha-1, as a small king paying tribute to chozha dynasty, Raja simha called this temple shrine by the name "Rajendra Vinnagar" as a sign of showing his gratitude, respect and admiration Rajendra chozha-1. As a small king of an autonomous state Mullikadu, under the control; of Rajendra chozha-1 of chozha dynasty, Raja simha set up twelve colonies called cheris by the names of Rajendra chozha-1 and his royal family member such as Raja 1 Raja cheri, Mummudichozha cheri, AurlMozhi thevar cheri, Nitha cinotha cheri, chozhendra singa cheri, sundara chozha cheri, vanavan mathevi cheri, logamadevi cheri, Kulasekaran cheri and soon. This has been referred in one of the documents of jatavarma sundara chozha pandya (1033-1034) as well as the maha sabha proceedings of the year 1477CE. Jatavarman sundara pandya and his son maravarmam sundara pandya renovated and expanded the temple with rampart or fortification during the first half of the 13th century. The main gate way tower and outer fortification of the temple was built by chozha kings during the later half of 13th century. Nayak kings erected vasantha mandapa of the temple in the later part of 16th century.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE TEMPLE**

The highest entrance tower. Rajagopuram of the Rajagopalam Temple welcomes us before entering the village. There exists a big beautiful VasanthaMandap with more than 10 steps in front of the temple. VasanthaMandap is also called PandalMandap with 40 feet breadth and 150 feet length, VasanthaMandap is very spacious containing a central mandapa of 5 feet height for housing the festival deity at the time of spring festivals of the temple like Brahmotsavam. After this Vasanthamandapa, We enter the temple through the entrance of 20 feet height and 10 feet breadth of entrance lower Rajagopuram with outer fortwall of 20 feet height. The temple has 3 tiered Rajagopuram with three copper vessels kalasam. The Rajagopuram is of 90 feet height with wonderful sculptures. There are steps in the Rajagopuram to go and see three tiers and Kalasam. The sculptures found in the Rajagopuram show the unity of the two sects saivism and vaishnavism of Hindu Dharma. After the main entrance of Rajagopuram, we find the Mandapa of holy flag post. There is an altar in front of the brass plated beautiful holy flag post.

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## SANCTUM OF UDAVAVAR

The sanctum old SriRamanujaAcharya is located on the northern side of holy flag post Mandapa of the temple. We reach Mahamandapa after going down through a few steps from the front Mandapa. The idols of Lord Sri Ram, Sri Sitamatha, Sri Lakshmana along with King and Queen who built the temple have been carved out of a single stone with fine art works in Mahamandapa. The idol of Sri RamanujaAcharya in the form of necter coated with colourful herbal paste is found in his sanctum adjacent to ArthaMandapa. The sanctum of Sri ManavalaMamunikal is located on the eastern side of the sanctum of Sri RamanujaAcharya in the ArthaMandapa. The deity of Sri ManavalaMamunikal shower his graceful blessings to devotes in the form of nectar coated with colorful herbal paste. The tutelary deity Karuppasamy in the form o stone idol is enshrined on the southern part of entrance inside the Raja Gopura the main tower of the temple. The devotees worship the tutelary deity Sri Karuppasamy by offering garland of Vada (Vada mala) during festivals. The streets around the outer fort walls of the temple are called Madaveethi.

## POOJAS & FESTIVAL

- Naimithiga Pooja
- Holy pond Festivals
- Daily poojas
- Theertham Holy water

## ART & ARCHITECTURE

### Structure of Sactum

The floor of the vimanam of pandy's Vaishnavite temple has been in the shape of Square, rectangle or circle. In vaishnavite temple. The presiding deity Lord Vishnu would appear in standing sitting and lying position in his sanctums shwering his graceful blessing to the devotes. In general the presiding deity Lord Vishnu would Vouchsafe his devotees in standing or sitting position at the sanctum where the flour of vinnana would have been set up in the from of circle or square.

### RECTANGULAR TYPE VIMANA & FLOOR OF SANCTUM

The presiding deity in standing position houses at a rectangular sanctum (29.9x39.3 feet) in mannarkovil Temple. Architectural style such as Kannam, Akarai, Prathikannama, Prathipathram have been used in the erection of mannarkovil.

### POTHIKAI

There are many style of pothi in temple artchitecture such as pallvas style, early Chozha, later chozha, Nayak style.

## SERIES OF PILLAR WITH YALI SCULPTURES

Yali sculpture take place in series of pillar in mannarkoil temple. In the yali pillar, sculptures of god in small Size, lion and Bhoothaganas are also found here and there. It is very rare to see the sculpture of Sarabesar on the southern side of ya;ipillai series and vinyaki on northern side.

## Conclusion

Temple in the form of do not live temple without temple in the form of the social harmony and religious integrity among the people. The temple is considered to be one of the most famous places of Sri Perumal. Although there are many temples in Tirunelveli. This temple Ambasamudram surrounding area people get all kind of benefits.

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