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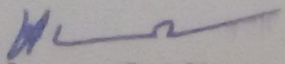
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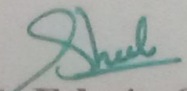
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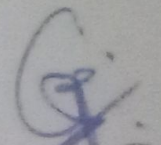
This is to certify that Dr/Mr/Mrs/Ms*C. SELVARAJ*..... *Associate Professor*..... of
.....*History MAc*..... participated in the International Conference on Historical Studies
and Research organized by PostGraduate and Research Department of History, MUSLIM ARTS COLLEGE,
Thiruvithancode, on 23-03-2023 and presented a paper entitled.....*Thirucharamathu malai*.....
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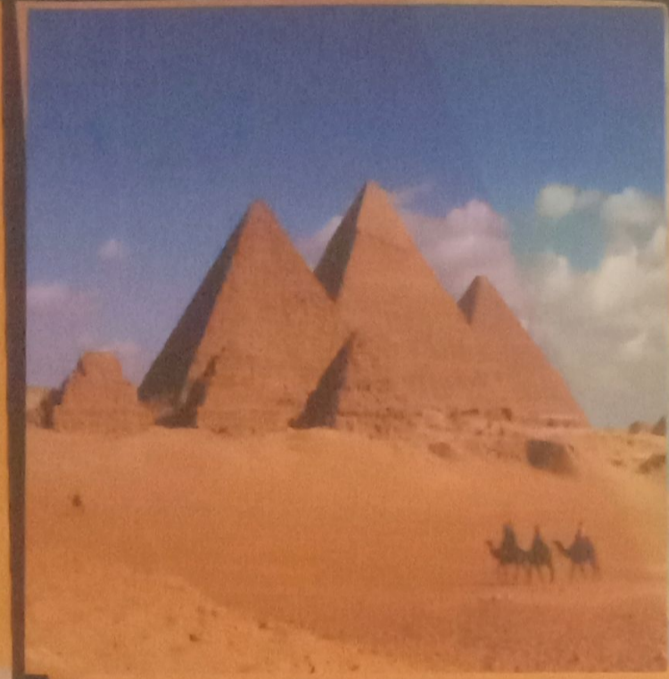
Convener



International Conference On



HISTORICAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH



Edited By

**DR. T. G. SEEMA GOPAL
DR. C. SELVARAJ
DR. G. PUSHPARAJ**

**23rd MARCH 2023,
THURSDAY**

Organized By

PG & RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

MUSLIM ARTS COLLEGE

THIRUVITHANCODE - 629174,

KANYAKUAMRI DIST

TAMIL NADU - INDIA

Proceedings of

International Conference on **Historical Studies and Research**

Name of the Author : Editorial Board
Address : Postgraduate and Research Department of History
Muslim Arts College,
Thiruvithancode, Kanyakumari District, 629174
Tamil Nadu, South India.

ISBN No
©2023
First Edition
Language
Name of the Publisher

: 978-93-84737-41-2

: Author

: English and Tamil

: Raj Pathippakam, Nagercoil

&

Postgraduate and Research Department of History
Muslim Arts College, Thiruvithancode,
Kanyakumari District.

Name of the Printer :

Besst Computers Azhagiyamandapam

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THIRUCHARANATHUMALAI – A HISTORICAL STUDY**C. SELVARAJ**

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ABSTRACT

Religion played an important role in India. The contribution of Jain religion to Indian heritage is more significant. As far as the cultural history of Tamil Nadu is concerned Jainism is, very ancient religion, Jainism enter into Tamil Nadu and also in the Southern tip of India ie Kanyakumari. It established popular Jain centers in Chitharal, Thirunarnandikarai, Nagercoil and Thirukurankudi, It seems that Chitharal became the head quarters of Jainism in South India.

Key Words :- Jainism - popular Jain centers - Chitharal - Jainism.

INDRODUCTION :-

Kanyakumari is a centre of all religion, Most of the people followed Hinduism . The rulers and monarch on the basic of varnas classified the people. The low caste people were tortured by high caste people. Christianity sprank up in various parts of the district. The Jains visited the places in various part of Kanyakumari and established their centres. The important centre is Thireharanathumalai (ie) Chitharal.

Spread of Jainism

Kanyakumari is considered as the sacred place for the Hindus, other religions such as Jainism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity, have also simultaneously established a hold in this district. Among them Jainism spread in this district during the early days of Christian era and it flourished and established a hold during the 7th to 8th centuaries A.D. Both literary and epigraphical sources testify that places such as Kottar, Thirunandikkarai, Thirukurandy, Thiruchaharanathu Malai, of this district were the important centres of Jainism. It is known that from these centres this religion spread to other centres of Northern India and also it maintained close interaction with neighbouring countries such as Sri Lanka. There are differences of opinion among scholars regarding the spread of Jainism in ancient Tamilagam. It is said that sage Visaga was sent to Tamil

Country to spread the religion in the Chera, Chola, and Pandya Countries. In the Tamil Country, Jainism spread in the 2nd Century B.C. as it is testified by Jaina inscriptions in Brahmi characters found in the hills of the southern districts of TamilNadu. The Jains paid due attention to the excavation of caverns, cave temples with a sculptures of Tirthankaras and their attendants such as **yakshas** and **yakshis**. These caves and cave temples are still found in this district in places like Kottar, Thirunandikkarai, Thirukurandy, Thiruchaharanathumalai, and these places are considered as important centres of Jainism.

KOTTAR

Kottar, a town in the heart of the district comprising the present day Nagercoil town. It was referred to inscriptions as Kottarana-mum-mudi-Colapurathana which was an important centre of Jainism. Though there is no Jaina temples at present, the inscriptions found in this region refer to the existence of jaina temples and the donations (Palliccandam) made to such temples. For instance, an inscription found in the Vishnu temple at Puravaseri dated in the Kollam year 372 (1196 A.D) refer to Palliccandum of the Jain temple at Kottaru. Similarly the Kanyakumari Inscriptions of Parantaka Pandya of 12th centuary A.D. refers to the boundry of the devadana lands belonging to the goddess Kanyakumari excluding the Palliccandam of the Jains. This

Palliccandam belonging to the Jain temple at Kottaru seems to have existed near Thovalai. This view is supported by the Kalugumalai inscription assignable to the 8th Century A.D. The present Nagaraja temple in Nagercoil town itself appears to have been originally a Jain temple. The presence of a number of stone images with serpent hoods suggest that this temple was originally sacred to serpent gods who used to be held in great esteem by the Jains in earlier days. This is supported by a number of inscription⁷ in the temple. These inscription record the gift made to the Naga and Nagaraja and further it mentions two Jaina teachers Kamalavahana Pandita and Gunavirapandita in whose favour the palliccandam was endowed. The Nagaraja temple inscriptions refer to two important Jaina teachers, Kamalavahana Pandita and Gunavira Pandita in whose name endowments were also made. So it is clear that Kottaru was a seat of Jainism in the earlier days.

THIRUNANDIKKARAI

Thirunandikkarai is also a Jain centre situated about two Kilometres north of Kulasekaram of this district. There is a Jaina cave excavated in a rock with sculptures of Jaina. Thirthankaras found inside the room attached to the hall. Further, there are eleven inscriptions found on the walls of the cave one of which narrates that the place of cave temple was donated by the Hindus. Another inscription states that in this cave the Jaina nuns settled and from there they propagated this faith. As this cave become popular, the royal kings also visited it and received blessings. An inscription on the wall states that the famous Chola king Rajaraja I in 1012 A.D visited this cave and celebrated his Aippasi Sadaya festival in commemoration of which he instituted a lamp to this temple.

THIRUKURANDY

Thirukurandy is a place situated near Suchindram. It was a centre of Jain monks. An inscription found in the Jain temple testifies that this was an advance training

centre for jains where eminent personalities of the jaina faith settled down. Further, in this centre religious discourses between the jains and the Hindus often took place. An inscription found in the Thanumalaiyan temple at Suchindram established such a practice. It also refers to the prevalence of Kalugarra (a kind of corporal punishment awarded to the jains by the Hindus) which proves that this was also a centre of Jainism in this district.

THIRUCHCHARANATHU MALAI

Thiruchcharanathumalai presently known as Chitharal is situated at two miles north east of Marthandam in Vilavancode Taluk. There is a natural cavern in this hill. On the overhanging surface of the rock, a number of Jaina figures of Tirthankaras and yakshis are carved in half relief. There are three shrine chambers which contain a plaster coated image of Bhagavathi and in the order two shrines contain half images of Mahavira and Parsavanatha. This Jaina temple was very popular in the earlier days as it is known from the rich donations offered to this temple.

CONCLUSION

Thus taking into consideration all these facts, it is to be concluded that Jainism spread in this district in the early days of Christian era and flourished during the medieval period. Subsequently due to the Hindu revivalism caused by the outbreak of Bhakti movement, Jainism began to decline and disappeared from the district. A sincere research on this topic will bring many new facts to rewrite the history of ancient Tamilagam perspective.

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