

Jain Monuments in Madurai

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N. Asha Devi

*Assistant, Professor in History
EMG Yadava Women's College, Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India*

Abstract

Madurai is a city of confluence where different faiths flourished through the ages. Jainism is one among ancient religions in the world. It was believed to have been founded by twenty four Theerthankarars from Atinatha to Mahavira . Historians believe that Mahavira's period was 590 – 527 B.C. Jainism was accepted as the religion of the people and kings in South India much earlier to the spread of Buddhism. Jaina tradition, Bhadrababu a Jain Saint foretold a famine of twelve years which made the Mauryan emperor Chandragupta to abdicate his throne and settle at ShravanaBelagola along with other saints and ended his life by going on a fast called sallekhena or starvation. There is sample proof of religious interactions between the Jains in Madurai and ShravanaBelagola and it is astonishing that Jainism had taken roots so deep in Madurai during the days of pure communication and travel. There were 14 popular Jain abodes for Jain monks in and around Madurai viz., Thiruparankundram, Samanarmalai, Kongarpuliyankulam, Vikkiramangalam, Anaipatti, Anaimalai, Anaipatti, Meenakshipuram (Mangulam), Arittapatti, Alagarmalai, Karungalakudi, Keelavazhavu and Thiruvathavoor, Kunnathur and Thirumalai . The nearby villages of Madurai City. This paper deals about the Jain monuments in Madurai.

Keywords: Mahavira, Jain Monuments, Madurai, Keelakuyilkudi, Samanarmalai, Jain Beds, Inscriptions.

Introduction

Madurai is a city of confluence where different faiths flourished through the ages. Jainism is one among ancient religions in the world. It was believed to have been founded by twenty four Theerthankarars from Atinatha to Mahavira .Historians believe that Mahavira's period was 590 - 527 B.C. Jainism was accepted as the religion of the people and kingsin South India much earlier to the spread of Buddhism.

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Keelakuyilkudi

In Madurai south of Nagamalar Pudukkottai village south of Madurai there is a small hamlet called “Keelakuyiljudi”, where an important Jain hill is located an old damaged Jain temple is located at the top of the hill. Jain figures and stones have been used by the local people construction of Muniyandi temple. Which is situated at the base of the hills. The steps leading to the top of the hills terminate in a small spring called “pechipallam”. The hills at keelakuyilkudi have several important features. It boasts of a eight feet Mahavir figurine caved at the cave locally called as Chettipadavu and row of beautiful Jain figures and pechipallam with vatteluthuin scriptions.

A Jain abode is situated in the northern side of the hills lying in a state of collapse. The entire hill needs to be preserved since it has a vital role in the religious and linguistic history of Madurai It was once the connecting link between Madurai and Shravanabelagola in Karnataka, an important Jain centre. Though the Government prohibits stone cutting 100mts circle of the protected monuments, stones are cut by using local bombs.

Anamalai

Aanaimalai is a solid block of gneiss almost three kilometres in length and about 90 meters in height, it derives the name from its resemblance to a massive figure of a reclining elephant. blinks to a massive figure of a reclining elephant. The diversity of Aanaimalai surpasses any other rock in Madurai. It Shelters a Jain abode with first century AD Tamil Brahmin inscription describing the hill as Ivakunram or elephant hills, a Hindu temple called Narasinga Perumal temple, a rock cut memorial called Ladamani temple, Jain belief and frescoes make Aanaimalai as a rock museum of Madurai.

Keelavalavu

Keelavalavu cave lives on the Chola-Pandya trade route. The connecting trade route is Alagarmalai, Mangulam, Arittatti, keelavalavu and Kundrakudi. Keelavalavu cave is one of the earliest Jain caves found in and around Madurai. One unique feature of the Keelavalavu cave is the

presence of Tamil Brahmi letters which are up side down. The inscription says that a person hailing from Thondi made these beds. These letters are may be deciphered using a mirror. Thiruvathur is the birth place of Ma Manika vasakar. Behind this place a hill is called Vandalia. In this hill two brahmi inscription are found. The intensive granite mining near keelavalavu in Melur, Tirupathur road has spread hill which still preserve the unspoilt beauty, until any other Jain abode, this place is easily accessible by a small mud motorable road near Keelavalavu, Jain figurines are caved in the rock at the top of the hills. One could find post holes around the Jain beds.

There are traces of grinding holes where medicinal herbs were prepared to cater to the local population. An enthusiast worshipper had installed a tin sheet over the ‘mahavira’ figure to protect it from rain. From the top, one could have a panoramic view of the surroundings including the disturbing sight of the deep granite quarry pits around the hills.

Samanarmalai

Samanarmalai near Keelakuyilkudi village has three monuments in the hillock. It has several Tamil-Brahmi inscriptions, a number of stone beds and many sculptures, which shows authority for Jainism in the ancient Tamil country. The hill contains two famous sculptures, Settipodavu and pechipallam, that show images of Jain Tirthankaras made by Jain monks in the 9th century BC. The Settipodavu contains the image of Mahavira, the last tirthankara of Jainism. The pechipallam contains eight sculptures, including Bahubali and Mahavira. Archaeologists have also found 2000 year old Tamil – Brahmi inscriptions and Vattelettu writings. The inscriptions reveal that hundreds of Jain monks took sallekena (fast unto death). There are flat rocks called stone beds, used by the monks to take rest. In the foothills, there is a Karuppanasamy temple and lotus pond. Some idols made by Jain monks are in this temple.

Alagarmalai

The Jain abode of Alagarmalai two kilometres East of kallalagar temple is famous for the rock paintings, ancient Tamil Brahmin inscriptions and dangerous location accessible only after

perilous climb. It has a perennial spring which once in hanced the thirst of Jain scholars. After the climb one can have the under red panaromic view from the cavern. Though historians differ about the version impalement of 8000 Jains in Madurai, there is sample proof that this impalement took place in Madurai ‘Sama Natham’ a corrupt version of ‘Samanar Rattham’ or ‘blood of Jains’ is situated about six kilometres away from Madurai and a winding path among acacia bushes and thorns lead to a place worshipped as Mayandi temple. The place is isolated in an eerie environment, but for the 10 feet trident and stone pillars with a hanging bell, there is nothing to suggest that it is a temple.

Conclusion

Indian youth comprising of children in schools have a special beauty towards rising awareness and protecting the which cultural heritage which is a part of the glorious history of our cultural history of our country with a view of sensitive the you are the future generation and in kids in them value heritage. Madurai the famous city of Pondyas has a lot offer to the tourism. Jain Monuments in Madurai are also most important tourist destination. Government has to take several steps to increase the tourists to visit Jain Monuments.

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Author Details

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Email ID: ashakarathi2007@gmail.com

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