

Srivilliputhur Andal Temple Study

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Abstract- Srivilliputhur Andal Temple in Srivilliputhur, a town in Virudhunagar District in the South Indian State of Tamil Nadu, is dedicated to God Vishnu. The Temple is associated with the life of Andal, who was found under a Tulsi plant in the garden inside the temple by Periazwar. The temple follows thenkalai tradition of worship. The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

The Temple has inscriptions from Chola, Pandya and Nayak rulers. The original structure was constructed by Tribuvana Chakravarthy Konerinmai Kondan Kulasekaran and the Andal Temple by Barathi Rayar. The temple's gateway tower, 192 ft tall, is the official symbol of the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Srivilliputhur is mentioned in Brahmakaivatsa puranam and Varaha puranam. This paper focuses on the etymology, legend, history, religious significance, architecture, festivals and religious practices followed in the historical temple.

The Srivilliputhur Andal temple is associated with the life of Andal, She is believed to have worn the garland before dedicating it to the presiding deity of the temple Periazwar, who later found it, was highly upset and stopped the practice. It is believed that Vishnu appeared in his dream and asked him to dedicate the garland worn by Andal to him daily, which is a practice followed during the modern times.

Vadapathrasayi is believed to have appeared to Andal, Periazwar and sages like Markandeya and Bhrgu¹. The temple follows Thenkalai tradition of worship. Six daily rituals and three yearly festivals are held at the temple, of which the Aadipooram festival, the birthday of Andal, celebrated during the Tamil month of Adi (July – August), is the most prominent. The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board of the Government of Tamil Nadu².

As per Hindu legend, the land around Srivilliputhur was under the rule of Queen Malli. The queen had two sons called Villi and Kandan. As per mythological legend, the place was referred as Varaha Kshetra. It was a dense forest named Champaka where the sages Bhrgu and markandeya were doing penance and had their hermitages in the place. A demon named Kalaneri was troubling the sages and they prayed to Vishnu to relieve them from the demon. Periazwar (Originally called Vishnuchittar) was an ardent devotee of Vishnu and he used to string garland Vishnu every day³. He was childless and he prayed to Vishnu to save him from the longing. One day, he found a girl child under a Tulsi plant in a garden inside the temple. He and his wife named the child as Kothai, who grew up as a devotee of Krishnan, an avatar of Vishnu. She is believed to have worn the garland before dedicating it to the presiding deity of the temple. It is also believed that Ranganatha of Srirangam Ranganathaswamy temple married Andal, who later merged with the idol.

The view that the Andal temple was built during the 14th century is highly debated. During the reign of Thirumalai

Nayak (1623 – 1659) and Rani Mangammal (1689 – 1706) this city became very popular. Thirumalai Nayak renovated all the temples of this city. He installed choultries, temple tanks, paintings and golden towers inside the temple. The sculptures in the hall leading to the shrine of Andal were also built by him⁴. Then it fell into the hands of Mohammed Yousoof Khan. Until 1850, Sri Andal temple was under the care of the king of Travancore. The British ruled the country till India attained freedom in 1947. The temple has two divisions – the one of Andal located on the Southwest and the second one of Vadapathrasayi (Vishnu) on the Northeast direction. A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all its shrines, the garden where Andal was found and two of its three bodies of water. The rajagopuram, the temple's gateway tower, is 192 ft (59 m) tall. The tower is originally believed to have been built by Periazwar with the prize money he obtained from religious debates in the court of Vallaba Pandya in Madurai. The Vadapathrasayee division has two precincts⁵. The sanctum in the second level approached through a flight of steps houses the image of Vadapathrasayee in a reclining posture and his consorts.

The temple houses have some rare Vijayanagara sculptures similar to the ones present in Soundararajaperumal Temple, Thadikombu, Krishnapuram Venkatachalapathy temple, Alagar Kovil and Jalakandeswarar Temple, Vellore. Cultural Significance

Srivilliputhur has a significant place in Vaishnava philosophy and worship practices. The Srivilliputtur divya desam has the unique distinction among all other divya desams of being the birthplace of two important azhwars among the twelve azhwars, sri periyazwar, who became the father-in-law of the Ranganatha himself and Andal who was the incarnation of Bhoomadevi and attained union with the Ranganathan at Srirangam. Andal is the only female Azwar saint of the 12 Alvar saints of South India⁶.

The temple follows Thenkalai tradition of worship. The temple priests perform the pooja (rituals) during festivals

and on a daily basis. Like other Vishnu temples of Tamil Nadu, the priests belong to the Vaishnavite community, a Brahmin sub-caste. The temple rituals are performed six times a day: Ushathkalam at 7 a.m, Kalasanthi at 8.00 a.m., Uchikalam at 12.00 p.m., Sayarakshai at 6.00 p.m., Irandamkalam at 7.00 p.m. and Ardha Jamam at 10.00 p.m. Each ritual has three steps: alangaram neivethanam (food offering) and deepa aradanai for both Vatapathrasayi and Andal. During the last step of worship, nadhaswaram (pipe instrument) and tavil played, religious instructions in the Vedas.) Thousands of people from the state participate in the “Aadi Pooram” festival celebrated in the Andal Temple. After early morning special pujas, the presiding deities, Sri Rengamannar and Goddess Andal are taken in decorated palanquins to the car⁷. The festival marks the adoption of presiding deity, Andal, by Periyazhwar after he found her near a Tulsi plant in the garden of Vadabadrasai Temple at Srivilliputhur on the eighth day of the Tamil month of Adi. The Temple Car Was Originally very heavy (40m tall and 650 tonnes) and it back to the original position. Before 2000, the practice of a monastic institution, the temple car was modified with hydraulic wheels to ease the movement. Kumbabishekam, the consecration of the Andal temple happened on 20 January 2016. Golden filials were also installed for Andal Temple. Good time to visit temple on Every Fridays & Saturdays.

END NOTES:

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