

# Arabs and Mosque in kayalpatnam

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**Abstract-** Kayalpatnam is an ancient historical coastal village of South India. It lies in the southeast part of Indian Peninsula, on the shore of Bay of Bengal. This village situated in Thoothukudi district. Once Kayalpatnam was chief trade center of Arabs. Chinese and Greeks were frequently visited for trade. There are 65 mosques in Kayalpatnam. Karuppu Udaiyar Palli was ancient one. It was built on (9th Hijra) A.D 630 by the following Sahabas (Representative of Muhammed the Prophet).

1. Kalid Ibn Saeed Ibn Al Ass(Rali)
2. Tabid Ibn Kais Ibn Sumas(Rali)
3. Abdulla Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarah(Rali)
4. Abdulla Ibn Abdulla Ibn Ubaiee(Rali)
5. Abdulla Ibn Abdul Aziz Ibn Umar(Rali)

Among the five eminent Sahabas the first four returned back to Arabia and last one went to Calicut for Missionary service. Every mosque in Kayalpatnam has its own historical background and closely associated with Socio and Economic life of the people. This paper attempts to bring out the first Arabian Settlement, Culture and historical background of the mosques in Kayalpatnam

## INTRODUCTION

Kayalpatnam is an ancient historical coastal village of South India. It lies in the southeast part of Indian Peninsula, on the shore of Bay of Bengal. This village situated in Thoothukudi district. Kayalpatnam was chief trade center of Arabs. Chinese and Greeks were frequently visited for trade.

## HISTORY OF KAYALPATTINAM

It is 30 km. away from Thoothukudi on the Thoothukudi-Tiruchendur highway. It is predominantly a Muslim populated village. The Muslims of the region claim that their ancestors were from Arabia and they have acquired lands from the Pandya King (ruler) and began their settlements in this place. A copper plate of Tirumalai Nayak issued to one Mudaliar Pillai Marakkayar reveals that the king called the elders of the place and made arrangements to rehabilitate the place. This was called Sonagarpattinam (residential place of Rome and Greek traders) otherwise known as Kayalpattinam.

The rights of collecting taxes and supervising the pearl fishing industry were handed over to the Marakkayars of Sonagarpattinam by Tirumalai Nayak.

A number of Arabic and Tamil inscriptions are found in Sonagarpattinam. They are mostly tombstone inscriptions reveals the death and burial of some important persons and religious head. They bear dates in the Hejeeri era corresponding to 16th century A.D. This place has also yielded one Pandya inscription in the reign of Kulasekhara.

The record has been secured from the Muhammadan graveyard called Karpudaiyarpalli. It registers a gift of 2 ma of land for burning a perpetual lamp in the Karupudaiyarpalli (Palli means mosque) in Kayalpatnam. Jamaluddin was the first Sultan of Madurai to ascend the throne. A mosque as a mark of respect to this Sultan Jamaluddin was built in 1336. The Arabic mothershaw School building was constructed by Jammaluddin. It is an exemplary for Islamic architecture. It is astonishing to note the existence of the same at present and it may even remain for posterity.

A little mention of Arabia is essential at the outset because the Prophet Muhammed (Peace Be Upon Him) was born in the city of Mecca and emigrated to another famous city Al-Madinah, it was the first Islamic state. Arabian Peninsula is the area which converted to Islam completely during the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH). This country of Arabia was the first center of the grandeur of Islam. In this country and in its language that revelation was sent and the last heavenly Book was revealed, which is the source of guidance to all the Islamic countries in the world till the day of Judgement. The light of Islam spread to everywhere in the world from Arabia. The Ancient House, the Ka,bah, towards which Muslims come from all over the world and appear together on the plain of Arafat worshipping and praying to Allah, prasing and glorifying his name. Arabia dominated the entire world and become the torch bearer and lamp of guidance.

Mosque is a place where the Muslims get together for prayers (Salat), remembrance of Allah (Dhikr), recitation of the Quran, seclusion (Itikal) and for many other religious

activities. The pious Muslims who used to wear long black dresses at that time mostly practiced seclusion (Itikaf) in this mosque. Therefore this mosque was called Karup-Udaiyar Palli (based on their Karuppu-Udai, black dress). The exact date of the construction of this mosque was unknown. One inscription found at the entrance of the mosque provides enough information about the mosque and this village. For maintenance of this mosque a king by name Veera Pandiyan granted lands within the boundary of Kayalpattinam. The year is not traceable, and difficult to identify whether the land granted by Veera Pandiya was a tax free land. Veera Pandiya ruled Madurai between the year 946 A.D and 966 A.D. Hence we conclude that this mosque was built 1050 years ago. As per this inscription Pauthira Manikka Pattinam, Kayal Karai, Kahir-ur were the other names for Kayalpatnam. This inscription also indicates about a long road with 8 feet width where the Sona-har tradesmen lived. The road should be on the east of the present Keela Nainar Street and also just east of Kalifah Appa Thaika, which was mentioned in tombstone inscription. Further this inscription points out the Anju Vannam, Sona-har Palli and Pauthira Manikka Pattinam, which were mentioned in "Palchanda Malai" (a very old Islamic Poem). This mosque is near Muhyideen Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Kayalpattinam.

Few years ago a rare stone inscription was discovered between Kadal Karai Palli and Karupuddaiyar Palli. This area is called Khosmarai which is very close to sea shore.

This rare inscription is in Arabic language clearly indicates, that the first Mosque name was "Masjid Al Iman". It was built on (9th Hijra) A.D 630 by the following Sahabas.

1. Kalid Ibn Saeed Ibn Al Ass(Rali)
2. Tabid Ibn Kais Ibn Sumas(Rali)
3. Abdulla Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarah(Rali)
4. Abdulla Ibn Abdulla Ibn Ubaiee(Rali)
5. Abdulla Ibn Abdul Aziz Ibn Umar(Rali)

Among the five eminent sahabas the first four returned back to Arabia during hijra 11th and met our noble Prophet Muhammed (Sal). The last one went to Calicut and built a mosque.

1. Kalid Ibn Saeed Ibn Al Ass (Rali)

He belongs to Quraishi family of Mecca. He has joined Islam in the earlier period and a good friend of the first four Caliphs. His brothers Amra and Afrar also joined Islam. He took part in Abishiniya war. He passed away during the reign of Umar (Rali) hijra 14th.

2. Tabid Ibn Kais Ibn Sumas (Rali)

He was a great orator. His voice was loud and pleasant. Mohammed the prophet admired his loud and clear voice. He took part in Yamama war and he was a leader in the battle field which was held during hijra 12th. He died during the reign of Hazarath Abubacker Siddiq (Rali).

3. Abdulla Ibn Saad Ibn Abu Sarah (Rali)

He was a relative of Uzman (Rali) He was one of the wahi writers. During the victory of Mecca, he went and met prophet Muhammad with his relative Uzman(Rali) and begged

prophet Muhammed to pardon his sinful mistakes. Prophet excused his mistakes with warnings. He was a Governor of Cairo for sometimes and died during hijra 13th

3. Abdulla Ibn Abdulla Ibn Ubaiee (Rali)

He was a famous Badr Sahaba He belonged to a good family His original name was Hababa. This name was changed as Abdullah by prophet.

4. Abdulla Ibn Abdul Aziz Ibn Umar (Rali)

He belongs to Umar Suraki family He went to Calicut and built a mosque on 632 A.D and named it masjid Muhammad. In ancient days the famous Kayal port was near Khosmarai area. All Ships touched Kayal that came from Greece, Rome, China, Persia and Arab countries. According to the oxford History of India by Vincent Smith, Marco polo visited kayal on Tamaraparani river twice in 1288 and 1293 respectively. This town became a busiest and wealthiest one because of the port. He describes Kayal as a noble city where much business was done.

The Sahabas or the first arrivals spread Islam and preached Islamic doctrines(message). The message was that "There is none worthy of being worshipped except Allah and Muhammed (PBUH) is the messenger of Allah".

Muhammed (PBUH) preached a new message for mankind. He abolished idol – worship and made people worship one God. He declared that all men are equal. He evolved a new social order based on the brotherhood of man. He uplifted the status of women. He made the society responsible for the care of the poor, the widows and the orphans. He inculcated the people that the fear of the day of Judgement. He waged a war against social evils of all kinds. He abolished all distinctions of birth, rank, race and colour. He placed a premium on merit and righteousness. He inspired the people with sense of a mission. He practiced what he preached.

When the first Arab settlers entered Kayal the Pandyan Kingdom was said to be ruled by Kadungon and the name of the sub king of this Korkai area was unknown. Professor Nilakanta Sastri in his book Pandyan Kingdom writes, the first two kings of the first empire of Pandyan Kingdom were Kadungon (590-620) and his son Maravarman Avanasulamani (620-645) whose reigns may be taken to have occupied at the close of sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. This information is from "The Velvikkudi grant of Paranaka Nedunjadayan and the Madras Museum Plates of Jatilavaraman".

The first Arab arrivals chose the pleasant Khosmarai area which was heart of Kayal for their residence. In ancient time this place was called only Kayal and not as Kayalpatnam. It is a clear proof that Kayalpatnam the centre of Kayal. Arabs who stayed here mingled with local people and preached Islam. They adopted local customs and habits. They intermarried with the local converts.

A long time, prayer was not conducted in Karupudaiyar Palli because this palli is situated 3 km away from Kayalpattinam. At present many new houses are constructed near to the palli. The people made an association and renovated the palli for

conduct prayer in the palli because people came close to the palli.

#### ENDNOTES

- [1] Abdul Latiff, R.S., The Concise History of Kayalpatnam, Samsudeen Appa Publication, Kayalpatnam, 2004, p.21.
- [2] Senthil Selva Kumaran, M., Heritage of Chidambaranar District., Thilaga Publishers., Tirunelveli, 1994, p.12.
- [3] Ibid. p.13.
- [4] Noohu Lebbai Alim – “Qasasul Anbiya”
- [5] Inscription at Karup-Udaiyar Palli,
- [6] Abdul Latiff, R.S., Kayalpatnam than Kayal, Samsudeen Appa Publication, Kayalpatnam, 2015, pp.25-27.
- [7] Interview with Muhammed Marzook., Business Man, Kayalpatnam, on 3.03.2018.
- [8] Khosmarai is Arabic word which means area or street in place.