CHAPTER - III

DEVARAM HYMNS OF THIRUVILIMILALAI
In this chapter, a sincere attempt is made to cull out both the religious importance of the temple and the natural fertility of the place and its surroundings as gleaned from the Ďevāram hymns related to this temple. The hymns of three saints called Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar eulogises both the importance of the place and the temple. Totally there are two hundred and thirty six Ďevāram hymns on this temple. Of this, 143 hymns are attributed to Sambandar, 83 to Appar and 10 to Sundarar. These hymns are in various panslike Naṭṭaipāḍai, Thakkarākam, Kuriṇji, Viyālakurunji, Mēka-rāga Kuriṇji, Kantarapancamam, Sadari, Puranīrmai, etc. The Ďevāram works are dated to the 7th and 8th Century A.D. and this period is called the Age of Bhakti Movement in the religious history of Tamil Nadu.

This period witnessed the revival of both Śaivism and Vaishnavism. Both Nāyanmārs and Ālvars propagated
Saivism and Vaishnavism respectively. Saivite temples have a renowned place in the hymns of the Nayanmārs. Buddhism and Jainism lost its importance. Vaishnavite temples are eulogised in the hymns of Alwars. The Saiva Nāyanmārs like Thiruviñanasambandar, Appar and Sundarar were called Devaram Trio, since they had composed the Devaram hymns. St. Māṇikavācagar composed Tiruvacacagam. In order to propagate the Saivite religion, they visited various temples and rendered the religious importance of the deities.

The importance of Tiruvilvimalalai temple is highlighted in the hymns of Thiruviñanasambandar, Appar or Thirunāvukkarasu and Sundarar. In the works of St. Māṇikavācagar, St. Śeṇdanar, Thirumūladevanayanar, Nambiṇṇuṭār Nambi and Śekkinār also, the importance of the temple gets a vivid description. The hymns of Sambandar and Appar bring to light their religious attachment with the temple.¹

RELIGIOUS IMPORTANCE OF THE TEMPLE AS GLEANED FROM DEVARAM HUMNS

The religious significance of the temple is revealed through in many of the hymns. The religious stories connected with the god and goddess of the temple get a detailed explanation, in the hymns and such description speaks of the sanctity of the temple.

St. Sambandar and Appar had the personal visit of this temple and at the time of their sojourn, the five hundred saints called Aynūruva Andaṇars\(^1\) attached with the Tiruvnilimalai approached them and due to their invitation Sambandar and Appar visited the temple and revealed the importance of the temple in their hymns.

Saint Ṛṇanasambandar and Vākīśar resided in the mutts located to the northern direction of this temple. They worshipped the lord of this place and rendered religious services.

---

\(^1\) The world Aynūruva Andaṇars represents hundred in numbers. In the inscriptions of the other temples also one can come across the word like Aynūruvar. Those Brahmins must be well-influenced both in the Vedas and Devaram works and they were paid by the temple authorities.
Once, there broke out a famine at Thiruvilimilalai. At that time Jnanasambandar and Vakisar were in a grief. Lord Siva of this place appeared in their dream and told them that He would provide daily a gold coin and that could be used for feeding their followers. Lord Siva also predicted that after the famine, the gold coin would disappear. As per the saying both Jnanasambandar and Vakisar found a gold coin at the east and west pitha respectively, located in this temple. The pillar on which the coins had been placed is seen even now.1

They used to take the coin daily and from that coin, they rendered the service of feeding their followers. They provided them food items like Thiruamudu, made out of vegetables, ghee, milk and curd twice daily.2

The followers of Vakisa had been dined punctually at the mutti named after Thirunavukkarasar. But the followers of Sambandar were not punctual. Sambandar met, the devotees and asked the reason for their negligence. They

---


29
replied that the merchants preferred only the coins of Thirunāvukkarāsār and not the coins of Sambandar.¹

Immediately Īñanasambandar pleaded that the God must give him pure coins as was provided to St.Appar. Sambandar sang songs in praise of the god and received the defectless gold coin.² After this, the followers were punctual in visiting the mutt. After this, the place never witnessed famine. Everything was set-right. Then St.Sambandar and St.Vākisār proceeded from Thiruvīlimilalai to reach Thirumaraikādu also called Vēdarāṇyam.

The aforesaid explanation is referred to in the work called Alagiya Māmulai Ambāl Pillai Tamil.³

THIRUTHŌΝI VIMĀNA SCENE

St.Sambandar stayed for a long time at Thiruvīlimilalai. The Brahmana’s and adiyars (devotees) of the Chāṭṭanāthhar temple at Sīrkāli proceeded from Sīrkāli to reach Thiruvīlimilalai in order to have the worship of the Lord. They were welcomed by Aynūrruva Āṇḍavars of

² S.Thandapani Desikar, Sambandar Devaram (Dharmapuram, 1953).
Sekkilār and Arunagirināthar also visited this temple and had sung songs in praise of this Lord of the Thiruvilimilalai temple. In their hymns, also the sanctity of the temple gets an unblurred explanation. Even now, the same sanctity is being maintained, and due to such importance, the visit of the devotees is being increased day by day.

In addition to the religious importance of the temple, through many hymns, it is known that the recitation of the vēdās and Thiruppadigam in the temple is a continuous process. The reciters had their survival near the temple. The hymns further brings to light the devoted lives of the reciters of the temple. Some hymns speak of the uninterrupted emanation of the Vēlvi (yāga) smokes inside the premises of the temple. Yet another hymns speak of the religious pūjas and ceremonies of the temple. The deities of the temple has been referred to in various hymns. The goddess of the temple is highly praised in some of the hymns. The different names attributed to both the gods and goddess brings to limelight the sanctity and the religious popularity of the temple.

Some hymns even reveal the religious attachment of the people with the temple. The agricultural products
offered for the performance of the pūjās and ceremonies also get proper description in the hymns. Even now, the oḻūvar of the temple recites the hymns according to the pans. He is being paid by the temple authorities.

The puranic importance of the temple is highlighted in one song of Appar. The attainment of Cakrā by Lord Viśnū from the Lord of this temple, after performing the pūjās with flowers, gets mentioning in an hymn. The same religious story is also mentioned in one song of Manickavācagar, as well as in the song of Thirumūltadēva Nāyānār.

The marriage form of the Lord of this temple, is also highly eulogised by Appar, in a single line of an hymn.

1 The verse runs as follows

Nirṛinai niraiyappuci Nittalā yiram pūkkontu
yerruli yoru nālonru Kuraiyak kan niraiya Viṣṭa
arrāluk Kāli naihi yavā Konarntilī āauūkōyīl
Virriruntālippar Vīḷi milaiyul Vīhittānāre

2 The verse runs as follows

PanKāyam ṣyiram pūvinilōr pukkurāiyat
tanKan yiyantaran cēvadi mircattalume
CāhKaranēmpiran Cakkaramār KarulīyaVārū
Yēnkum paravi nantonekka maṭamo.

3 The verse runs as follows

Kūrathu Vahak Kurittu narekkārām
Kūrathu ceytu Koduttanān malakku
Kūrathu ceytu Kottuttanān cāttikkūk
Kūrathu ceytu tariittanān Koḷame

4 The verse runs as follows

Nittamana Valanena nir- KiṇranKān.
The hymns of Sundarar reveal the importance of the temple in various aspects. One of the hymns of Sundarar mentions the Viḷi tree as the sthalavriksha (sacred tree) of the temple. The vimāna of the temple is described in another hymn.¹

Two hymns brings forth the high elevated buildings of Thiruvilimilalai.²

SOCIAL IMPORTANCE OF THE PLACE AS GLEANED FROM DĒVĀRAM HYMNS

The harmonious life co-existed among different sects gets an unblurred explanation in the hymns. No mention is made in any of the hymns, the rivalries either social or religious. As the everyday life of the people is attached with the temple, there arises no chance for the occurrence of conflicts. Due to such congenial environmental condition, the place, even now, has its popularity, and the devotees, who visit the temple are free from any fear of conflicts. Many hymns, illustrate such social importance.

¹ Matangal punta Vimānam manmicai
² tinitta mātantōrum celvam mālhu tirumilalai
celu mātat tirumilalai

34
THE NATURAL FERTILITY OF THE PLACE AS GLEANED FROM DĒVĀRAM HYMNS

The natural fertility of the place gets a detailed narration in many of the hymns. In one hymn it is stated that the place was surrounded on all sides by water. This fertility form one of the reasons for the religious revival in this place. Some hymns mention the highly grown-up trees in and around this place. Yet another hymn exposes the music emanated from the birds. The environment as described in the hymns is of a par excellent one. This fertility even now exists and due to this, the temple has a renowned name.

The multi-sided importance of the temple revealed mainly through the hymns of Sambandar, Appar and Sundarar, will ever have a distinguished name, in its history. Of all the literary evidences, the role of the dēvāram hymns is highly a commendable one. The names of the deities of the temple as referred to the hymns of Dēvāram are vijñānāthar, Vīlināthamudaiya Nāyanār and Vīlināthamudaya Deva. The goddess is referred to as Sundaragujaṃbika and Alagiyaṃmulai Amman.