CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

The research thesis entitled Sacred Complex of a Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Temple, Radhapuram: A Historical Study is an attempt to highlight the socio, economic, cultural, architectural, sculptural and artistic significance of the Shiva temple situated at Radhapuram, one among the taluks of Tirunelveli District which possesses a rich hoary past.

It is a captivating theme. The scholar has identified it as a potential area for doctoral research programme through his close association with the temple and the village. Radhapuram village has long been recognized as an important center of politics and spiritualism in Tamil Nadu. Moreover, this region still remains a virgin soil for intensive research, for no one has taken it up for any doctoral research programme so far. This is an added advantage and incentive to the scholar.

The Land

Radhapuram, a developing area, comes under the present Tirunelveli District; situated in the south-eastern extremity of the
Indian Peninsula.¹ The topographical map of Radhapuram is roughly triangular in shape.

Tirunelveli District is surrounded by the Gulf of Mannar on the East and South, by the Kerala state and Kanyakumari District on the West and by the Virudhunagar District on the North.² It is situated between 8.45° and 9.45° of the northern latitude and 77.20° and 78.20° of the eastern longitude.³

It is 110 kilometers long from North to South and 80 kilometers wide from East to West.⁴ The word Tiru-Nel-Veli (the sacred paddy hedge)⁵ therefore appropriately refers to the paddy fields which have surrounded this District.⁶ The climate may said to be equable. The temperature ranges between a maximum of 108° F and minimum of 80° F.⁷ The River Tamiraparani, the precious jewel of Tirunelveli, originates from the Agasthiyar Hills⁸ in the Pothigai Ranges in the Western Ghats; and passes like a green-winding ribbon through the

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⁸ Ibid., pp.132-133.
Ambasamudram, Tirunelveli, Srivaikuntam and Tiruchendur taluks irrigating the fertile lands all along.\textsuperscript{9}

\textbf{Chittar, Manimuthar} and \textbf{Vaippar} are some of the other important streams of the District.\textsuperscript{10} The Western Gate borders on the Western side of the Sankarankoil, Tenkasi and Ambasamudram taluks, while a portion of them is situated on the western and Southern part of Nanguneri taluk also. In the taluks of Tiruchendur, Srivaikundam and Nanguneri, there is wind-swept sand dunes that at times look like small hillocks.

The mountain range is covered with forests which shelter a good number of tigers and other wild beasts that sometimes make four ways into the nearer parts of the plains.\textsuperscript{11} Rainfall in this area is very light. The normal annual rainfall in Tirunelveli is 814.8- mms, while the State average rainfall is 1008.1 mms,\textsuperscript{12} the fertility of the soil and a moderate rainfall account for its rich vegetation. The District is

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{9} D.R. Bhandarkar, \textit{Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture}, Asian Educational Services, Madras, 1989, p.56.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{The Imperial Gazetteer of India}, Vol. XXII, Clarandon Press, Oxford, 1908, p.362.
\end{flushleft}
overstocked with sheep and cattle.\textsuperscript{13} Soil in the District may be classified into red and black soil varieties.

The northern part of the District consists of the black loam and the southern part red loam.\textsuperscript{14} The black soil is of high value when compared to the red soil.\textsuperscript{15}

Kovilpatti taluk and a few portions of Sankarankoil taluk on the north-eastern part of the District consist of black soil where cotton is grown extensively. The availability of cotton in abundance at a cheaper rate in the Tirunelveli District was utilized by the Colonial Government and that led to economic exploitation. \textit{Pearl fishery} in the erstwhile Tinnevelly coast was a great source of revenue to the Pandya Kingdom.\textsuperscript{16} The sea-faring Tamils of the Tinnelvelly coast were much more able-bodied and athletic than the ordinary people.\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Pliny} in his notes says that the pearls were mainly imported to the Roman Empire from the Indian Ocean coastal areas. \textbf{Pearl} was called by the Romans as \textbf{Unio} meaning unique gem, as no two pearls are alike in size.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{13} L. Dudley Stamp, \textit{The World}, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1961, pp.105-108.
\item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Madras Information}, Op.cit., p. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{15} S. Sundararajan, \textit{Nooru Andukalukku Mun Tirunelveli Mavattam}, Oxford Press (Tamil), Madras, 1985, pp. 72-73.
\item \textsuperscript{16} \textit{Chilappathikaram}, XXVII, p.127.
\item \textsuperscript{17} M. Williams, \textit{Modern India and the Indians}, Poonam Publications, Delhi, 1987, p. 189.
\end{itemize}
shape, polish and weight. Korkai was the headquarters of the Pandya country which carried on a lucrative pearl trade with the Roman Empire.

**People**

The inhabitants of Tirunelveli may be divided into three groups of castes – the Brahmins; high and low caste non-Brahmins and the untouchables.

The Brahmins occupied the highest position in the society. Next to the Brahmins, the Vellalas, who are high caste non-Brahmins, were considered important. In the medieval period they functioned as the chief advisors to the ruling families of Tirunelveli District. Next comes the Maravas, who are a militant community displaying valour and vigour. Pallas and Parayas were treated as the untouchable communities.

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18 S. Arunachalam, *The History of the Pearl Fishery of the Tamil Coast*, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar, 1982, pp. 39-42.
Once the Nadars were also considered untouchables and were termed as Shanars. Several of them became Christians to escape from the tyranny and stigma of caste.\textsuperscript{24} In the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, due to the evangelistic works of the Christian Missionaries the lowest sections of the Tirunelveli region were converted to Christianity.\textsuperscript{25}

The Conversion, as the American historian Frykenberg observes, led to increasing education (literacy) and self-improvement or self-reform, the most positive social reform of all. Conversion also created in the converts, consciousness of social disability and injustice. This in turn led to social protest on the one hand, and provoked social resistance and repression on the other hand. Muslims are found in large number in the Tirunelveli, Tiruchendur, Tenkasi and Ambasamudram taluks. They belong to the \textit{Lebbai} and the \textit{Maraikkayar} groups; and are mostly Tamil speaking traders.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{24} R. Sewell, \textit{The Historical Inscriptions of South India}, Asian Educational Services, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 92-93.
\end{thebibliography}
The major caste groups Brahmins, Vellalas, Maravas, Nadars and the so-called Untouchables constituted about eighty percent of the total population of the Tirunelveli District.\textsuperscript{27}

The remaining twenty percent consists of very small groups of Kammalar (artisans), Kanakkar (writers), Kaikolar (weavers), Kusavar (potters), Ambattar (barbars), Vannar (washermen) and others. Muslims and Paravas represent two minority groups.\textsuperscript{28} Thus the social structure in Tirunelveli District in the pre-modern times was so complex and social relations so confusing that there was very little social cohesion and solidarity among its inhabitants.

**Archaeological Significance**

Tirunelveli district is rich in Archeological remains. The Archaeological Survey of India began to survey the inscriptions of this district since 1895. The earliest inscription of the district belonged to 9\textsuperscript{th} century A.D.

In the Narasimha Perumal temple, Tirunelveli, a Tamil inscription of the second year of Varaguna Pandya’s reign (A.D. 769-


\textsuperscript{28} D. Ludden, *Peasant History in South India*, Oxford Press, Delhi, 1983, pp. 43-44.
770) has been found. Abundant inscriptions belonging to the later Pandya period are also found in the district. Tenkasi Pandyas, the Vijayanagar rulers and Madurai Nayaks also installed inscriptions which have historical value and remain as primary sources to write the early history of the district.

Numerous ancient temples exist in the district. Rarely one could see a village in the district without either a Shiva or Vishnu temple, belonging to Pandya, Chola, Chera or Nayak period. Temples in Tirunelveli, Amabasamudram, Papanasam, Krishnapuram, Courtallam, Thiruppadalamaruthur, Sankarankoil, Cheranmahadevi, Gangaikondan, Thirukkurumkudi, Vijayanara-yanam, Brahmadesam, and also Radhapuram, are of great historical and archaeological importance, not just for the elegance but for the message that they carry in the inscriptions which are numerous.  

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Historical Significance of Tirunelveli District

During the 275 years of Kalabharas regime also, Tirunelveli District was ruled by the Pandyas only. Regarding the first Pandya Empire, there are references about two Varaguna Pandyas.

Varaguna I ruled the country from A.D.718 to 815 and Varaguna II ruled the Pandya country from A.D. 862 to 885. The last ruler of the first Pandya Empire was Rajasimha (A.D. 900 – 920). He was defeated by Parantaka,\(^{31}\) the Chola ruler and thus the first Pandya Empire came to an end in the Pandya country which comprised the Tirunelveli district including Radhapuram too.

When the Cholas of the Vijayalaya line ruled the country, Tirunelveli District was administered by Chola –Pandya Viceroyys. During this time Tirunelveli District came under the division of Rajaraja Valanadu since A.D.995.\(^{32}\) It became Raja Raja Mandalam since A.D. 1012 and Tirunelveli District was known as Mudikonda Chola Valanadu.\(^{33}\)


There are evidences related to the Tirunelveli Pandyas since A.D.1132. *Maravaraman* Srivallabhan (A.D.1132-1163) was the founder of this line and he made Tirunelveli their capital and Radhapuram village became a part of this new regime. There broke out a civil war between Veera Pandya of Madurai and Kulasekara Pandya of Tirunelveli. It is believed that both of them were brothers. After the end of the civil war, once again Pandyas of Madurai recovered rapidly.

Information is available about the rulers of the Second Pandya Empire like *Jatavarman* Kulasekaran, *Maravarman* Sundara- Pandya I, *Maravarman* Sundara Pandya II, *Jatavarman* Sundara Pandya I and *Maravaraman* Kulasekara, and their liberal donations to the temples of Tirunelveli District.\(^{34}\)

The years A.D.1310-1311 are an important milestone in the history of the second Pandya Empire. There was a civil war between Veera Pandya and Sundara Pandya; and the Malik Kafur's invasion and the chaos in the country were the important events during this

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In the meantime, the Tirunelveli region including Radhapuram village was captured by the Travancore King Ravi Varman Kulasekaran. Though, the Ulugkhan’s (General of the Delhi Sultanate) expedition converted the Pandya country as the twenty third province of the Sultanate. Tirunelveli District including Radhapuram region was ruled by the Pandyas without any disturbance. That resulted in the emergence of Tirunelveli Pandyas and Tenkasi Pandyas. The Vijayanagar authorities allowed the Pandyas to rule this region independently.

Among the Tirunelveli Pandyas, Srivallabha (A.D.1534–1543), an important ruler defeated the Venad King on the banks of the river Tambraparani. The cause for the battle was said to be the capture of Cheranmahadevi, Brahmadesam and Ambasamudram including the Radhapuram region by the Venad ruler from the Pandyas.

The Venad ruler Udhaya Marthandavarman was defeated in the war. After Srivallabha, there were two Pandya rulers viz., Parakrama

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35 S. Krishnasamy Iyengar, South India and Her Mohammaden Invaders, Mudgala Trust, Madras, 1921, pp. 80-88.
38 S. Gurudhasa Pillai, Tirunelveli Seemai Charithram, (Tamil) Barani Achchakam, Tirunelveli, 1931, pp. 15-18.
Pandya Kulasekaran and Tirunelveli Perumal Kulasekaran (A.D.1551-1567) who were brothers. Apart from the details given above, there are references to the Athiveera Rama Pandya I (A.D.1564-1606), Varadungan (A.D.1588–1609) and Varaguna Raman Kulasekaran (A.D.1609-1615) etc.\textsuperscript{39}

The details of the Tirunelveli Pandyas and Tenkasi Pandyas were not known after Varaguna Kulasekaran. Certain inscriptive evidences are available about certain successive rulers like Abirama Athiveeera Raman, \textit{Seevala} Varakuna Raman, etc. Thus the Pandyas, as a ruling clan, preserved the Tamil culture and literature, right from the Sangam period upto 17\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{40}

It is very rare in world history that a single dynasty ruled for such a long time and preserved the cultural, political, religious and linguistic features of the Tamils. When the Vijayangar rule was in its hey days, the whole south India including Tirunelveli region formed

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  \item \textsuperscript{39} W.E. Ganapathy Pillay, \textit{Ettaiyapuram Past and Present}, Oxford Press, Madras, 1890, pp. 40-50.
\end{itemize}
}
part of the empire. Viswanatha Nayak was appointed Viceroy of the Southern region of the empire.41

Ariyanatha Mudaliar was appointed as co-administrator of the Tirunelveli region including Radhapuram in order to restore peace and order there.42 The local Chieftains, who called themselves *Pancha Pandyas* (five Pandyas), created problems. So Viswanatha Nayak made a compromise and the minor chiefs were integrated into his *Palayam* system.43 Viswanatha Nayak and Ariyanatha Mudaliar took measures for the development of Tirunelveli town, by which temples were built, villages and streets were organized and every convenience of the inhabitants was looked after. Ariyanatha Mudaliar’s office became the perpetual patrimony in his family that led to the emergence of the celebrated family name *Medai Delavoy Mudaliar*.44 This family became one of the richest and most powerful families in the region and remained so for many centuries.

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Then Krishnappa Nayak I, Virappa Nayak, Krishnappa Nayak II, Muthukrishnappa Nayak I, Muthu Virappa Nayak, Tirumalai Nayak, Muthu Virappa Nayak II, Chokkanatha Nayak, Rani Mangammal, Vijayaranga Chokkanatha and Rani Meenkashi ruled the Tirunelveli region as the Nayaks of Madurai.\textsuperscript{45}

During the Nayak regime, Tirunelveli was known as \textit{Tirunelveli Seemai}. In A.D.1736, Chanda Sahib of Arcot deposed Queen Meenakashi but the Tirunelveli region including Radhapuram area did not accept him.\textsuperscript{46} Anyhow in A.D.1744, the Arcot Nawab's rule commenced in Tirunelveli district and trouble started in the Madurai and Carnatic regions. So the Travancore King annexed Kalakkad region, a portion of \textit{Tirunelveli Seemai with} his Kingdom.

Since A.D.1744,\textsuperscript{47} Tirunelveli District including Radhapuram area was administered by Anwar Khan as \textbf{Faujdar and Amildar} appointed by Anwarruddin, the Nawab of Arcot. After that, one Alagappa Mudaliar was appointed \textbf{Amildar} of this district. But the


emergence of Yusuf Khan popularly called Khan Sahib, witnessed dramatic changes in the administration.

One Tarappa Mudaliar, a wealthy financier of Tirunelveli was announced as the renter for three years. On 1st July A.D. 1756, Tarappa Mudaliar assumed the management of Tirunelveli region. The Madras Government posted Khan Sahib at Tirunelveli to render military support to the administration of Tarappa. Very soon differences of opinion arose between Tararappa Mudali and Khan Sahib.

In the meantime, one Mir Jafar was appointed as the administrator of Tirunelveli region by Maphaz Khan, Governor of Madurai. Even though the Tirunelveli poligars supported Maphaz Khan, there were confusion and turmoil in the Tirunelveli region including Radhapuram area. In the meantime, the Travancore army annexed Valliyoor which includes Radhapuram. In the meantime Khan Sahib became the Governor of Madurai. He tried to vacate the

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Travancore army from Valliyoor area which included Radhapuram region also. But the Travancore King cleverly convinced Khan Sahib so as to have the Kalakkad area under his rule. Khan Sahib initiated measures to improve the economy and cultivation in the Tirunelveli region. In the meantime Maphaz Khan revolted against Khan Sahib.

**Tirunelveli under the Arcot Nawabs**

The rebellion of Maphaz Khan left the district's economy including Radhapuram region in very bad shape. People groaned under heavy taxation. Failure of monsoon added fuel to fire. The authorities did nothing to repair and restore the water courses to facilitate irrigation for agriculture. The wandering troops lifted cattle from the villages, and so the people began to flee to jungles deserting their villages. Yusuf Khan's letters stand as an evidence of the miseries of the people of Tirunelveli in the 1750s’.

In the 1760s Tirunelveli witnessed the attacks of Fazl-ulla-Khan, Commander-in-Chief of Hyder Ali of Mysore. In this period, it is stated that about one fourth of the population died of starvation and

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52 Military Country Correspondence. Vol.3, Maphaz Khan's Letter to Arcot Nawab, Dated 8 November, 1755, pp. 84-86.
one fourth fled to the jungles. In A.D. 1780's Hyder Ali personally conducted raids on the southern districts including the Tirunelveli region.\textsuperscript{54} In A.D.1781, the English East India Company appointed George Proctor, the first civil officer for the purpose of receiving and administering the revenues of the Carnatic Nawab. On July 12, A.D.1792, the Madras Government signed the famous Carnatic Treaty with the Nawab.\textsuperscript{55}

Upto the death of Mohammad Ali, the Nawab of Carnatic and Tirunelveli District was under the control of the Nawab. On July 31\textsuperscript{st} 1801, as per the new modified Carnatic treaty, the Madras Government appointed S.R.Lushington as the collector of Tirunelveli.\textsuperscript{56} Since then all the Nawab's supremacy over Tirunelveli came to an end. A new revenue settlement by name Permanent Revenue Settlement was introduced in Tirunelveli District from A.D.1803.\textsuperscript{57} The southern pillagers were called Zamindars. To remove

\textsuperscript{56} J.F. Kearns (ed.) \textit{Introduction to Panjalamkuruchi Poligar and the State of Tinnevelly}, Palayamcottah, 1873, pp. 50-60.
\textsuperscript{57} S.M. Lakshmana Chettiar (Somalay), \textit{Op.cit.}, pp. 360-370.
the anomaly of this new revenue settlement, Village Lease System was introduced in A.D. 1808.58

**Tirunelveli District between 1800 and 1947**

The district was under the administration of nearly 200 collectors since A.D. 1790. Rani Mangammal, the Nayak queen was the pioneer in road building in Tirunelveli District.59

By A.D. 1818, there remained three principal roads crossing the district. Since A.D. 1891, construction of bridges was started in the district. The bridge connecting the twin towns Palayamkottai and Tirunelveli was built in A.D. 1843 across the river *Tambraparani* by Sulochana Mudaliar, a Dubash for the Company Government and the bridge was named after him.60

The District Boards and Taluk Boards constituted as per the Local Boards Act, A.D. 1882, played a vital role in improving public health. The Madras Government administered education by setting up

an administrative and inspecting agency called the Department of Public Instruction.\textsuperscript{61}

Regarding local administration, village \textit{Karnams} (accountant) and village \textit{Munsiffs} (headmen) were appointed to keep the village accounts of the land revenue and maintain law and order. In A.D. 1862, Puckle's settlement was implemented.\textsuperscript{62} In the meantime Ryotwari settlement was introduced by Munroe, the Governor of Madras. Towns began to develop from A.D. 1800 to A.D 1881 in Tirunelveli district. These towns had housed the region's major government offices, bankers, businessmen, temples and deities and educational institutions.

The Government offices located in the towns of the district was the taluk office, sub registrar office, police station and taluk board and union board offices. Radhapuram was one among the developed towns of this district.\textsuperscript{63} Caste differences began to surface in the society during the British rule.

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The Brahmins, the Vellalas and the Vadugars enjoyed full rights. The Nadars fought for private property rights and for temple honours. Missionaries supported Nadars' efforts and the Nadar’s conversion to Christianity made the Tirunelveli district one of the bright spots of the heathen world for the S.P.C.K. and S.P.G. missionaries.\textsuperscript{64}

Politically, the technical transfer of power from Company to Crown was not felt in the district and the colonial administration continued without much disturbance until the birth of the Indian National Congress in A.D. 1885. Tirunelveli district kept calm during the Vellore Mutiny of A.D. 1806 and during the Sepoy Mutiny of A.D. 1857.\textsuperscript{65}

The Madras Native Association founded in A.D. 1852 was the first of its kind in the freedom struggle. Within a year, a branch was started at Tirunelveli, which requested the people for donation. Gradually in A.D. 1884, the Madras \textit{Mahajana Sabha} was formed.\textsuperscript{66}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{64} R. Hardgrave, \textit{The Nadars of Tamil Nadu – The Political culture of Community in Change}, University of California Press, 1969, pp.260-265.
\end{itemize}
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had a solid share in mooting, discussing and finalizing the formation of the Indian National Congress.

The first conference of the Indian National Congress was held at the Gokuldas Tejpal Sanskrit College in Mumbai on 28th December A.D.1885. Out of the 72 representatives participated, the Madras contingent constituted 21, of whom Peter Paul Pillai belonged to Tirunelvelvi District.67

In A.D.1906, the 14th Madras Provincial Conference was held at Tirunelvelvi bringing together important leaders from all over Tamil Nadu under the banner of Swadeshism.68 When the Surat split of the Indian National Congress had occurred, Keir Hardie, a Labour party member of the British Parliament visited Tirunelvelvi. Surprisingly, Swadeshi coins were manufactured in Tirunelvelvi by two patriotic goldsmiths namely Narayana Asari and Shanmugam Chetti.69

In A.D.1908, when the European Circus Company, the Abel Circus, performed in Tirunelvelvi District it was totally boycotted by the

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68 Ibid., pp.120-125.
69 Ibid., pp.128-130.
people as it was foreign.\textsuperscript{70} The Coral Mill Strike proved the solidarity of the support given by the common people and mill-workers.

The birth of Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company as a brain child of V.O.Chidambaram gave a tough fight to the mercantile activities of the English.\textsuperscript{71} The \textit{Swadeshi Sangam} or national volunteers formed by the Tirunelveli based lawyers gave support to V.O.Chidambaram's efforts.\textsuperscript{72}

The arrest of V.O. Chidambaram and Subramania Shiva under section 108 of the criminal procedure code caused the out - break of Tirunelveli Riots of A.D.1908. Following these incidents, Tirunelveli sedition trial was conducted in which 45 citizens of the composite Tirunelveli District were convicted.\textsuperscript{73}

Three lawyers, Krishna Swamy Iyer, Ganapathy Sastri and Sadhu Ganapathi Panthulu of Tirunelveli also faced sedition charges. The net result was the birth of revolutionary terrorism in this district.\textsuperscript{74}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.},pp.20-25.
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibid.},p.30.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{Ibid.},pp.162-163.
\end{flushright}
Brahmachari, Autobindo Ghosh, V.V.S.Iyer, Bipin Chandra Pal, Bala Gangadara Tilak, et.al. Influenced the Tirunelveli society.\textsuperscript{75}

In the 20\textsuperscript{th} century, Tirunelveli became the birth place of Militant Tamil Nationalism and hot bed of extremist politics. \textbf{Subramania Bharathi}, who was the native of Ettayapuram in the Tirunelveli District, played a dynamic role in the Indian National Movement.\textsuperscript{76} His myriad poems kindled the patriotic fervour and richly contributed to Tamil national awakening. \textbf{V.O.Chidambaram Pillai}, another great patriot of Ottapidaram in the Tirunelveli District was a militant nationalist and a strong disciple of Bala- Gangadar Tilak. He founded the \textbf{Swadeshi Steam Navigation Company} which operated ferry services from Tuticorin to Colombo, inspite of threats freely held out by the British Imperialism. \textbf{Vanchi Nathan}, the Hero of Maniyachi, took up gun for the cause of India’s freedom. His bullets put at rest the life of Ashe, the Collector of Tirunelveli in a railway compartment in A.D.1911.

Varahaner Venkatesa Subramania Iyer (V.V.S.Iyer), a veteran freedom fighter, founded the \textit{Bharathwaj Ashram} (Tamil Gurukulam)

\textsuperscript{76} S.H. Chaudhri, “\textit{Civil Disobediences during the British Rule in India 1765- 1857},” Calcutta, 1935, pp. 50 -60.
at Cheranmahadevi in the Tirunelveli District, and it was sponsored by the Indian National Congress.\(^77\) Due to some administrative lapses, this Gurukulam had created controversy of considerable importance. Thus, the Tirunelveli region has been a place of historical significance.

During the Gandhian Era in the Indian struggle for freedom, the Cheranmahadevi Gurukulam episode, breaking of Neil Statue at Madras and the strike in Papanasam Mills deserve special mention. Tirunelveli district gave a mixed response to the civil disobedience movement announced by Gandhiji.\(^78\) Leaders of Tirunelveli District like J.P. Rodrigues, P.Kanthasamy Pillai and A. Masilamani Pillai were arrested.\(^79\) The British silenced the agitation through clamping the section 144 of the Indian Criminal Penal Code in the town. The people observed hartals against the arrest of national leaders like Gandhiji, Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru and Vallabhai Patel.\(^80\)

During the course of the Civil Disobedience Movement, night meetings were conducted at street corners. N.Somayajulu of

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77 N. Muthukumar, Dravida Eyakka Varalaru (Tamil), Sri Hindu Publications Chennai, 2010, pp. 110-120.
79 Personal interview with V. Shanmugam Pillai, (Thyaki) aged 85, Aralvoymozhi on 10.05.2009.
Tirunelveli was the main speaker in that meeting. Unfortunately the Tirunelveli District administration with the support of the loyalists arranged public meetings in a number of places to canvass support for the government’s action against the volunteers of the civil disobedience movement.

Local newspapers like *Varanthara Varthamanam* was threatened by the police not to publish any article supporting the Congress. *Arunothayam Press* and *Sitaram Press* were warned of dire consequences. During the Quit India Movement of A.D.1942, all sections of the society including the college students joined the movement. The murder of an Assistant Salt Inspector *Loane* at Kulasekarapattanam was an untoward incident that happened at this time.

To put it in a nutshell, from A.D.1900 to A.D.1947, about 540 freedom fighters belonging to the present Tirunelveli District participated in the Indian independence movement. They hailed from

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81 Thyaki N. Somayajulu 60th Birth Day Souvenir, Barani Pathippakam Tirunelveli, 2001, pp. 4-6.
various places of the district including Valliyoor and Radhapuram.\textsuperscript{85} When Nethaji Subash Chandra Bose recruited Indian National Army in Malaysia, about 100 people who had been to Malaysia from Tirunelveli district\textsuperscript{86} for employment opportunities enrolled themselves in the army out of patriotism. Most of them belonged to Nanguneri and Radhapuram taluks.\textsuperscript{87}

After the Second World War and the attainment of Indian independence, they returned to their homeland.

**The Historical Background of Radhapuram**

It is quite obvious that to know the history of a particular place or region, it is imperative to learn the past events that took place in the area of the historical study. Accordingly, to learn the real history of the southern part of Pandyanadu (*Thenpandinadu*), one should study the historical events that took place in that region. When one thinks of studying the history of *Thenpandinadu*, the period of Tamil Sangam comes to our mind first.

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Aynadu - Sangam Period

The region that surrounded by the Pothigai Hills in Thenpandinadu was known as Aynadu. That is to say, the present Kanyakumari district and the southern part of present Thirunelveli district upto the river Thamirabarani belonged to the Aynadu.\textsuperscript{88} Ay Andiran, the first king of Ay dynasty, ruled over the Aynadu during the sangam period.\textsuperscript{89} After the sangam period, there is no information about the reign of Ay dynasty upto 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D. After an interval, some references about Ay kings were available from the stone inscriptions of the Pandyas.

After the 7\textsuperscript{th} century A.D, the northern part of Kanyakumari district (including Thirunelveli upto Thamirabarani) came under the rule of the Pandyas, when the Pandya Kings, Ranatheeran and Jadilaparanthakan waged war against the Ay Kings and captured the regions.\textsuperscript{90} Yet, there is no evidence available about this war and the capture of the region.

\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Tamilnattu Varalaru Pallavar Pandyar Kalam, Muthai Pakuthi}, (Tamil), Tamil Valarchi Eyakkam Veliyedu, Chennai, 1996. p. 223.
Hari Kesari Maravarman conquered the Kottaru territory. His son, Kochadiyan (A.D.700-730) waged a war against Ayvelhir (who created a civil war) and defeated him at Maruthur. Kochadiyan’s capital was Aykudi, which had already been the capital of the kings of Ay dynasty. Later on, Kochadiyan annexed and ruled over the vast region of Aynadu from the south Travancore up to River Thamirabarani. Radhapuram, the religious center was situated in the Aynadu.91

The inscription related to the 35th year of Maravarman Harikesari’s rule was found out in a cultivating field in the village namely Thalapathysamudram Paracherry. In that inscription that runs about 86 lines, two separate endowments stand recorded in the ancient Tamil script (Vatteluththu) by Irumbattuvelan of Karaikanna Nadu.92

The inscriptions of the endowments reveal the fact that 50 goats were offered to maintain the oil-lamp in the rest house at Raja Kattaniruppu Perumpandal in Nattatruppokku Perumalanchi.93

91 C. Vai. Iraiyanar Aakapporul Urai, (Tamil), Thamotharanpillai Pathipu, Chennai, p.56.
Kochadaiyan’s son was Rajasimhman (A.D.730-769) and his grandson was Nedunchadaiya Paranthakan *alias* Varagunan (A.D. 769-815). Varagunan conquered the Ayvelirs and constructed a strong fortress at Karavanthapuram to protect the region from the attacks of Ayvelirs. That fortress is now known as Ukkiran Kottai.\(^94\)

**Varaguna Pandya I (769-815)**

Varaguna Pandya recorded his copper edict at Velvikkudi during the 3\(^{rd}\) year of his rule, and a similar edict at Srivaramangalam during the 17\(^{th}\) year of his rule. These two copper edicts throw light upon the history of Pandya Kingdom. These copper edicts further give information that Varaguna Pandya constructed the famous Temple at Radhapuram and that he ruled over a vast area that included the Pandya, Chola and *Thondaimandalam* regions.\(^95\) He had the honour to have ruled the Kingdom for a pretty long period of 50 years (A.D. 768-815).

He defeated the Pallava king and his allies (the kings of Kerala and Kongunadu) in the wars held at Pugaliyur, Ayiraveli and Ayirur. Venadu came under his rule. *Marankari Maran Eyinan* and *Satthan*

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Ganapathy, Enathy Saththan, Deeran Moorthy Eyinan and Sankaran, Sridaran were the ministers of Varaguna.\footnote{S.I.I. Vol.VI. Ins. No: 105. p. 27.}

The Inscriptions of Varaguna Pandya

The stone inscriptions of Varaguna are even now found in the Chola region. Of them, the inscriptions related to the 4th year of his reign are found in Thiruviyalur and Thiruneiththanam, the inscription of the 6th, 8th and 10th year of his reign are found in Aduthurai, Kumbakonam and Senthalai; and those of the 11th year of his reign are found in Tiruchirapalli, Thirukkodika and Thiruchottruthurai.

Most of his inscriptions are related to the 39th, 41st, 42nd and 43rd year of his rule and they are found in Vijayanarayanam, Kottaikarukulam, Thalapathi Samudram, Ervadi, Nambithalaivan pattayam, Thiruchendur, Kalugumalai, and Ambasamudam- all in Tirunelveli District. All these inscriptions refer to Varaguna’s offerings of lands, and endowments for the maintenance of Nantha Vilakku, Daily Pooja, nivedhanam, etc, in the Saivite temples. And the inscriptions found at Irattai Poththai in Ervadi, speaks of Varaguna’s service to the religious center of the Jains too.\footnote{S.I.I. Vol.VI. Ins. No: 105. p. 28.}
It is clear from the inscriptions found elsewhere that most of the
inscriptions reveal the fact that Varaguna patronized the Hinduism in
a remarkable way, despite his being a *Vaishnavite*. Varaguna
constructed the Saiva temple at Radhapuram, yet there is no
inscription found at Radhapuram itself, regarding the construction of
the temple. Similarly, Rajendra Chola has also done many services to
this temple, but no inscription is found here regarding his patronage
to this temple.\(^{98}\) The inscriptions installed by later kings of Venadu
give references of services by Rajendra Chola.

The reason for the absence of evidences regarding Rajendra
Chola is that Radhapuram was situated in the border of Pandya
Kingdom, and it is clear from the ancient name of Radhapuram,
*puraththayanadu poosangudi alias* Varaguna *Pandyanagaram*.\(^ {99}\) The
term *puraththayanadu* means the land scape that lies between two
regions; and forms the border of them.

Many historical evidences might have been destroyed or
undermined during the irreparable destruction of Radhapuram due to
the frequent wars between the Ay kings and the Pandya kings. The

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culmination of the destruction of Radhapuram might have happened when the Pandyas waged war against Aynadu, with the strong support of their allies—Chola King, Chera King and the King of Ceylon. Most of the inscriptions reveal the fact that Varaguna patronized Hinduism in a remarkable way, despite his being a Vaishnavite.

Presently the Thothikkarai Pillaiyar in Kanni and the fortress well are the remains and evidences for the existence of the fortress in the past. Yanathiradu near here is an additional evidence for the same. Further, Kanniyakumari, the Puraththaya Nadu\(^{100}\) (known as Kumarimangalam of Rajaraja Valanattu Puraththayanadu) Variyur, Karaikkottai (Aralvaimozhi) and Agastheeswaram were also brought under the destruction by the wars.

**The Cholas**

The reason for the name Radhapuram: The Chola king, Rajarajan built the big temple at Thanjavur. His various stone inscriptions are found in the *Saiva* temples at Vijayanarayanam, *Gangaikonda Cholapuram*, *Mannarkoil*, *Kutral*, *Seevalapperi*, *Cheranmadevi*, *Tirunelveli*, *Thiruppadai Maruthu*, *Thiruvalleeswaran*,

Paayankottai, Brammadesam and Kottaikkarungulam, all in the southern part of the Pandya Kingdom.\textsuperscript{101}

Regarding the later historical events, the stone inscriptions at Thiruvalangadu and the text on Rajaraja ula Kalingaththu Parani throw light upon the war fought against the Chera King by Rajaraja Chola in A.D.988. Earlier, Rajarajan defeated Amarapuyanga Pandyan. It is assumed that in the war against Amarapuyanga Pandyan, Radhapuram might have been brought into enormous destruction.\textsuperscript{102} After having conquered the Kanthan Salai of Chera King in A.D. 988 Rajarajan undertook a Dhikvijay.

The inscriptions installed by Rajarajan (A.D 995-1001 A.D) in the Saiva temples at Radhapuram, Palayankottai, Cheranmadevi and Tirunelveli, give information on the fact that Rajarajan was conferred the title Rajakesarivarman. And he felt the honour to use the title Koraja Kesari before his name. All the inscriptions found in the places mentioned above were engraved during his Dhikvijay.

Rajarajan marched his army against the Chera King and he devastated the Kanthan Salai. Earlier, he defeated the Pandya King...
Amarapuyangan, who allied with Chera. In the war at Kanthan Salai, Amarapuyangan was killed. Then, Rajarajan proceeded on his ‘Dikvijay’. The villages, towns and temples destructed in the wars were reconstructed and renovated. After the repairs and reconstruction, Puraththayanattu Poosangudi was known as Rajarajeshwaram.

Rajarajan’s son Rajendra defeated the Ceylon King, Mahindan V, who supported the Pandya and Chera Kings, and then he defeated Pandya and the Chera Kings too, during A.D.1017-1019.103 During these years too, Poosangudi of Varagunapandeeshwaran in Puraththayanadu was terribly destroyed. From the available evidences of inscriptions, we come to know that Purathayanadu was under the rule of the Chola Kings, Rajaraja and Rajendra.

During the Chola’s reign, Kolkotran Rajendra Chola Pallavarayan alias Neriya Moovenda Velan was the Royal Deputy of the Chola Kings in Puraththayanadu. The inscriptions related to this period are found in Suseendram, Therur, Kanyakumari and Moonjirai.104

Rajathirajan, one of the sons of Rajendra was crowned in A.D 1018, as the Prince, and he had been the Chola Prince for a period of 26 years, upto A.D. 1044. As a Prince, Rajathirajan marched his army against Chera and conquered him. He ascended the throne as the Chola King in A.D.1044, when his father Rajendra Chola died.

The inscriptions or other evidences related to the period A.D. 1042-1791 of Rajendra Chola are not available. Rajaraja III, son of Rajendra was crowned as the King of the Pandya region.

During his reign, Rajaraja III constructed temples at Kottaru, Bramhadhesam, and Mannarkoil and in many other places. The Alagiyamanavala Perumal Koil at Radhapuram might have been constructed and the renovation of Sri Varagunapandeeshwar temple at Radhapuram might have been performed and the erection of Duwajas Sthambam (flag mast) might have been done during this period by Rajendra Chola.105 The stone inscription erected by Dharmaraja of Venadu in A.D.1791 throws light upon the construction of Alagiya Manavalaperumal Temple at Radhapuram by Rajendra Chola.

Chola King, Kulothunga I (1070-1120)

During the reign of Rajaraja I, the Kings of Pandya principalities who paid tributes to Rajaraja Chola, decided to wage war against Chola King and thereby to aggrandize their region and to establish their own rule over their own principalities.

So, it was imperative on the part of the Cholas - Rajendra Chola, his sons and his grandsons - to march against the Pandyas and suppress them. When the Cholas ruled over Chola region and Pandya region, they were known as Chola Pandyar. After the reign of Chola Pandyan, the Pandya region was segmented into five Principalities and five Pandyas ruled over their respective principalities.

Kulothunga I marched his armies against the Pandyas, and defeated them and conquered their regions in A.D.1081, and in the same year he defeated the Chera King also and annexed the Chera region to his Kingdom. When heavy tax was levied in 1117, 1118 and A.D.1119, people could not bear with the burden of land tax, and so they fled away from their native places. The Brahmins of Vanavan Madhevi Chadur Vedhimangalam fled away in A.D. 1117, and the people of Koneri Rajapuram fled away in A.D. 1119. Kulothunga Chola had offered bullocks to Saiva temple at Radhapuram, and recorded
the same in the stone inscription in A.D. 1118, the 48th year of his reign.  

**Pandyas Regime Again**

The inscriptions of the Pandyas’ period (A.D. 1190-1218) found in the temple were erected by Sadaiyavarman Kulachekara I, Jadavarman Thiribuvana Chakravarthi Kulachekaradeva. The details obtained from the inscriptions are as follows:

This Pandya King, Sadaiyavarman Kulachekara I, was the son of Vikramapandian.

He did not extend a helping hand to the Chola King, Kulothunga III; instead, he very much troubled him.

Rajaraja III took over the Chola administration in A.D. 1216. In the same year, Maravarman Sundarapandian I, son of Sadaiyavarman Kulasekaram I ascended the throne in Chola region, and he waged war against Rajaraja, conquered him in the war in A.D. 1219, and assumed the title Chola nadu Kondaruliya Sundarapandya Devan.

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Then, he returned Chola nadu to Rajaraja III, and thus assumed the title *Chola nadu Valangiyaruliya Sundara Pandyan*.\(^{107}\)

**The Kings of Venadu**

Venadu, extending from Kollam to Thiruvanandhapuram became an independent principality in the 12\(^{th}\) century, during Ramavarman Kulasekaravan’s reign A.D.1090-1102. By the end of Ravivarma Kulasekaran in A.D.1314, the right of kingship lineage of sons (*makkal vazhi*) came to an end, and changed into the lineage of in-laws, sister’s sons (*marumakkal vazhi*).

*Poothalaveera* Sri Udhaya Marthanda Varma, the King of Venadu ruled over the region and extended his territory up to Tirunelveli during A.D. 1516-1535. The inscriptions erected by him are found in the temple of Krishna in *Suseendram, Kottaru, Thalakkudi, Chinnamuttam*, etc. He constructed a palace at Kalakkadu and restored its previous name *Cholakula Vallipuram*.\(^{108}\)

A war between Vijayanagara Kingdom and Venadu Kingdom was held during this *Udhaya* Marthanda Varma in A.D.1537. During the

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period A.D.1538-1570, Poodhalaveer Ravivarman defeated Sankaranarayanan of Jayadhunga Nadu, and installed two stone inscriptions at Alagaman temple in Vadiveeshwaram. These inscriptions give reference to the purchase of lands to Vadiveeshwaram Udaya Nayanar and the donation of lands by Ramappayya Nayakkar for the regular periodical pooja for the Varagana Eashwara Nayanar and Kalyasundara Nachiyar at Rajarajapuram. The Nayakka Kings of Madurai invaded Nanjilnadu frequently during their regime A.D.1529-1736 and thereby Nanjilnadu suffered a great loss and devastation. The two Kings of Venadu, Ramappayya Nayanar and Ravikutty pillai marched their army against Nanjilnadu in A.D.1634-1635. The traditional history of Ramayya Nayanar and Ravikutty Pillai still exists in Tamil and Malayalam, in the form of folk songs.

The inscription installed by Dharmaraja in the Perumal temple at Radhapuram tells upon the fact that Rajendra Chola had constructed the Perumal temple.

Dharmaraja was the second King of (Thiruvangur) Tranvancore state. It was his uncle, Marththandavarma, who put an end to Venadu

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and established the Travancore state. And so Marththandavarma was the first king of the Travancore state.\textsuperscript{110}

Karthisgai Thirunal \textit{alias} Dharmaraja, the second king of Travancore state ruled over the state for a period of 40 years, A.D. 1758-1798. He was alive upto his 73\textsuperscript{rd} age. In the early years of his reign, the extent of his Kingdom was from Kanyakumari in the south upto Karur on the north. Tippu Sultan of Mysore invaded Travancore; after his invasion, Thiruvananthapuram became the capital of Travancore state.

In A.D.1784 Dharmaraja (\textit{Karthigai Thirunal}) went on a pilgrimage to Rameswaram and he realized the felt-need of the pilgrims; and so he established mutts, with board and lodging, drinking water facilities on the way from Travancore to Rameswaram. He undertook renovations for many \textit{Saiva} temples. Seven years after his pilgrimage, \textit{Karthigai Thirunal}, undertook renovations of Varagunapandeeshwara temple at Radhapuram and Alagiya Manavala Perumal temple. He recorded these renovation works in an inscription installed by him in 1971.

During these renovations, the earlier stone inscription erected by Rajendra Chola might have been damaged. So, Dharmaraja has mentioned the construction of Alagiya Perumal temple by Rajendra Chola in his inscription\textsuperscript{111} (A.D1971).

Dharmaraja, Karthigai Thirunal introduced the coinage Anantaraman coin and \textit{Ananta Varagam} coin. Apart from these, a cut-stone of \textit{Rasichakra} in the ceiling of Amman \textit{Sannathi Kottagai Mandapam} (\textit{Anuppu} Mandapam) and an inscription nearby were fixed. The bulletin of the temple informs that two copper edicts (\textit{sasanams}) were also found there.

There are two human figures Sculptured - one in the pillar on the south of eastern entrance with the name (above the head) Alwarthirunagari Subramaniapillai (worshipping and facing the north) and the other in the pillar on the north with the name (above the head) Alwarthirunagari Meenakshi pillai\textsuperscript{112} (worshipping and facing the South).

\textsuperscript{111} E.M. Subramania Pillai, \textit{Radhapuram Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Thirukovil Varalaur} (Tamil), Kanesan Achsukoodam, Tirunelveli, 1962, p.22.

Research Problems

In this study certain fundamental questions have been raised which constitute the working research problem. To mention a few:

(i) Whether or not the Pandyas of the second empire established their authority over the south which includes the Radhapuram region?

(ii) Whether or not Varaguna Pandya, a Pandya King established his suzerainty over Radhapuram region?

(iii) Who was responsible for building Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Nithyakalyani Ambal temple at Radhapuram?

(iv) How far the Venad and Travancore Kings were responsible for the expansion activities including the installation of the Dwajasthamba?

(v) Whether or not the rituals and festivals are strictly performed even now?

(vi) What role played by this Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Nithyakalyani Ambal temple in the tourist significance of Tamil Nadu in general and Tirunelveli District in particular.

(vii) Whether or not the architectural significance of the temple including various granite mandapas established a unique place in the architectural history of Tamil Nadu?
(viii) Whether or not the importance of *virali* turmeric in this temple maintained a difference with subordinate temples.

(ix) Whether or not the inhabitants of Radhapuram and neighboring villages maintained their close connection with the temple through conducting their betrothal and marriage ceremonies in the temple premises.

(x) Whether the sculptures carved in the *vasantha mandapa* are unique; If so in what respect?

(xi) Whether the present management of the temple has failed to maintain the earlier rituals and *agamas*, if so in what respect?

(xii) How far did the successive governments since independence create spiritualism among the common people?

(xiii) Whether the role of various spiritual committees constituted by the people voluntarily stand for a break with the past.

These and similar questions have been raised in this study and an attempt has been made to find answers which constitute the findings of this research project.
**Objectives of the Study**

This research work has its own exclusive objectives. They are

(i) To highlight the origin and growth of Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Nithyakalyani Ambal temple at Radhapuram.

(ii) To present elaborately the rituals and festivals performed in Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Nithyakalyani Ambal temple.

(iii) To study the art and architectural features in the temple and also their significance.

(iv) To focus the study on the sculptural edifices and their amazing forms.

(v) To study and describe the temple administration, in general and the income, the temple employees, daily poojas in particular, in the past and present.

**Limitations of the Study**

In the premises of this temple there are a number of inscriptions which highlight the donations of philanthropists to conduct rituals in the temple and the festivals in it. There is lot of contradictory views about the name of the King Varaguna Pandya due to the occurrence of the name in various periods. No concrete source is available about the origin and growth of this temple.
Another limitation of this study is the non-availability of documental evidences about the agamas, rituals and festivals. But through customs, conventions and traditions these rituals in the temple have been following in this temple.

**Period of the study**

Even though it is a research related with a temple, it is essential to investigate the historical background of this village Radhapuram. So a historical narration on the basis of chronology has been given about this village. Regarding the temple, inscriptional references mention about the existence of this temple since 12th century A.D. But the temple witnessed expansion and completion during the time of later Pandyas particularly Tirunelveli Pandyas and Tenkasi Pandyas and also under the Travancore Kings.

Upto the end of 20th century A.D., the temple witnessed eight times poojas every day. Gradually it disappeared; nowadays, poojas are performed only four times a day. In order to highlight the latest changes, the period has been expanded upto the present day.
**Area of the Study**

Originally called Rajarajapuram as per inscriptions, this village got the present name Radhapuram recently. There is no concrete evidence about the relationship between the temple and Rajaraja, the Great. But the inscriptions of the temple speak about the Pandya and the Travancore Kings and their donations for the performance of rituals and celebration of festivals in this temple.

Unlike the subordinate temples of this district, there are a number of subordinate temples situated around Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Nithyakalyani Amman temple and the village. So attention has been given to study the village where the temple is situated and also the main temple along with the subordinate temples etc. Focus has been given to highlight the rituals, festivals and *agamas* of the temple, and also the artistic significance of the temple has also been dealt with.

**Methodology**

The methodology followed in constructing the thesis is partly descriptive and partly analytical and interpretative. In order to describe the major events and development in the historical sequence and to establish their interconnectedness a chronological narration
becomes essential. In highlighting both the known and unknown information about the temple, historical explanation and critical interpretation become imperative.

**Sources of information**

The construction of the thesis has been made on the basis of both primary and secondary sources. The important primary sources consulted for the preparation of this thesis were the inscriptions available within the temple, inscriptions encarved in subordinate temples and also the *Thalapurana* of Radhapuram village.

The *Mathilagam* records of the Travancore Kings, the records preserved in the Travancore *Devasam* Board, records from the Travancore Public Works Department, etc., supplied a lot of information regarding the donations to the temple, the systematic performance of *agamas*, rituals and festivals etc., during the past.

Kingdom (Reprint), Madras, 1972; P.R.Srinivasan's Koil Kalaiyum Sirpangalum (Tamil), Madras, 1965; T.M.Baskara Tondiaman's Tamil Kovilgal Tamizhar Panpaadu (Tamil), Tirunelveli, 1961; N.Arumugam Pillai's Thiru Rasai kovil Varalaru (Tamil), Tirunelveli, 1943; V.S.Padmanabha Ayyar's A Short Account of Tinnevelly District, Tinnevelly, 1933; V.Kanakasabai's Tamil eighteen hundred years ago, New Delhi, 1904; J.J.Bhabha's Splendour of Tamil Nadu, Bombay, 1980; A.J.Dinakaran's The Second Pandyan Empire, Coimbatore, 1987; W.E. Ganapathy Pillay's Ettaiyapuram past and present, Madras, 1980; D.P.Chinnaswamy's Perumaimigu Pandiayar Kaala Veera Varalaru, (Tamil), Chennai, 2001; Prabanandar's Aalayankalum Ahamangalum (Tamil), Madras, 1973; S.Ramanatha Pillai's Thirukovil Vazhibaadu (Tamil), Madras, 1977; R.Venkatraman's Indiyakkovil Kattidakkalai Varalaru (Tamil), Madras, 1983; etc, supply a lot of information about the village, the temple and the agamas, rituals and festivals of the Shiva temples in general. But these are not sufficient to construct the history of this temple. More over these books provided general information about Tirunelveli District, in which the village Radhapuram is situated. Some of the secondary sources supplied information about the social settings of Radhapuram village;
and some other works gave information about the temple festivals and celebrations in a general aspect.

During the preparation of this work, there emerged a number of gaps. In order to fill in the gaps, personal interviews were conducted with the temple priests and elders of the village and also with some academicians; and the gaps were filled. The outcome is the present thesis entitled Sacred Complex of a Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Temple, Radhapuram: A Historical Study.

Chapterization

The present thesis has been constructed with seven chapters along with an Introduction and a Conclusion. The Introduction gives a vivid picture about the location of the temple village Radhapuram in the Tirunelveli District, a general picture about the district in which Radhapuram village is situated, a profile of Radhapuram village, etymology of the name of the village, flora and fauna, rainfall, climate, historical background of Radhapuram village, scope and purpose of the study, methodology, sources of information and Chapterization etc.

The Historical Background of Radhapuram deals with the southern part of Pandyanadu i.e., Thenpandinadu, the region
surrounded by the Pothigai hills, the Kings of Ay dynasty upto 7th century, the reign of Varagunapandya (769-815 A.D), Rajarajan’s war against Pandiya King (988 A.D) and his ‘Thikvijay’, the construction of Alagiyananavala Perumal temple and erection of Dhwajasthambam by Rajendra Chola, Reign of Kulothunga Chola and the restoration of Pandiya regime in 1219 A.D. It throws information on the Kings of Venadu and their right of Kingship-the lineage of sons changed into the lineage of in-laws (Sister’s son).

The second chapter entitled ‘The Origin and Growth of Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Nithyakalyani Ambal Temple’ highlights the origin and development of the temple situated at Radhpuram village. It also explains the original structure of the temple built during the beginning stage by King Varaguna and the additions and modification of the temple during the successive rulers particularly the Travancore Kings et. al., it also speaks of its innumerable inscriptions both recorded and unrecorded.

It also explains the importance of Sri Varagunapandeswarar Nithyakalyani Ambal temple through the establishment of a number of subordinate temples which is a unique feature of this temple. Some of the subordinate temples are very popular and famous due to
various aspects. These temples even now receive *padithrams* (grants) from the main temple.

For example, Vijayapathi temple, one of the subordinate temples, is very popular among the Hindus, because it is the only temple in India where *Maharishi Vishwamitra* is enshrined in a separate *sanctum*. Devotees from various parts of the world come to this temple and get their problems solved. This and similar information have been included in this chapter.

The *third chapter* entitled *Rituals and Festivals* depicts the very strict temple *agamas* which are being followed in this temple. Another notable point highlighted in this chapter is the routine rituals performed in this temple every day.

The utilization of *Virali turmeric* in this temple as *prasadam* is a unique one and it is being used in this temple alone. The liberal donations of *Virali* turmeric to this temple by the devotees are preserved in this temple for so many months and never get spoiled. The monthwise festivals and the annual car festival also have been highlighted meticulously in this chapter.
The fourth chapter narrates the **Art and Architectural Significance of the Sri Varagunapandeeswarar Nithyakalyani Temple**. The artistic significance of the sculptures, *mandapas*, stone works, gigantic *Dwajasthamba* (flag staff) of the temple have been recorded in a detailed manner. This temple is an incomplete one, because the outer *prahara* has not been completed so far. But the existing *praharas* explain the artistic beauty of the artisans of the particular period.

The fifth chapter **Sculptural Edifices** of significance gives a detailed description about the sculptures of the temple, the minute works on granite, the creation of birds and animals as sculptures in the pillars, the roof and walls of *vasantha mandapa, arththa mandapa, muha mandapa, outer prahara, inner prahara, floral designs*, and the *erotic* sculptures in this temple.

The sixth chapter **Temple Administration** provides a detailed picture about the systematic and well-organized temple administration during the later Pandya Kings and also during the Travancore suzerainty.
The various officials appointed to look after the better maintenance of the temple during the time of Royal authority and the heavy inflow of grants and donations from the members of the royal families has been discussed in detail. This chapter describes the present system of temple administration and its maintenance including the pathetic condition of the temple. The temple possessed 4000 acres of landed properties, both wet lands (nanjai) and dry lands (punchai); and hence, the income from the lands was very normal and perfect in the past. Unfortunately nowadays due to the changing political situation, and also the appointment of the officials of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment Department of the Government of Tamil Nadu, this celebrated temple is very poorly maintained.

The tenants of the temple lands are not paying the taxes properly. Due to the misappropriation of temple funds and lands, the temple has to lose its annual income. Besides, the maintenance of the temple is also very poor. There was a strong crew for the temple maintenance during the past. Nowadays majority of the temple administrative positions are vacant and the net result is poor maintenance of the temple. This chapter also explains the public
support and cooperation for the maintenance of the temple both physically and financially.

Due to the emergence of spiritualism in the recent past, a number of committees have been constituted to perform the *poojas* and rituals in a systematic manner. The liberal donations given by the philanthropists give a boost to the committees to conduct the *Chitrai* car festival and *Ayppasi Thirukkalyanam* (Divine Marriage). These are the points highlighted in this chapter.

The seventh *chapter, Conclusion* of the thesis explains the answers to the questions raised in the hypothesis; and it is just like a survey of all the chapters. The inscriptions both recorded and unrecorded so far have been given in the Appendices. The various rituals, *agamas* and related matters have also been given in the Appendices. In order to substantiate the arguments, a detailed illustration has been added at the end of the research work.