INTRODUCTION

Tiruchendur is one of the earliest settlements of Tamil Nadu. It was formerly included in Tirunelvelidistrict carved, out of Tirunelveli district on 20.10.1986\(^1\). TiruchendurTownPanchayat lies on the coast, Bay of Bengal. It is located Thirty eight kilometer south of Thoothukudi and Fiftytwo kilometer east of Tirunelveli. It is bounded on the north by Virapandiyapattinam on the south by Kulasekharapattinam on the west nallur and Kurumbur.

Tiruchendur reputed for its holiness and fertility of the soil has a glorious history in the past and present. Tiruchendur is one of the six holy centers celebrated for the worship of Lord Muruga where as the remaining five spots are top of a hill. This is only the place that is on the seashore in a picturesque setting. This is a traditional version about this place that lord Muruga had his own stationed here before finally destroying the arms of surapadmen. Whose fort was located in the widest of ocean called viramahendrapuram. Festivals commemorating the lords conquest of surapadma are being celebrated annually as was mentioned earlier on there is mention about this temple in the Tamil classic of the Sangam era. Purananuru eulogises this place.\(^2\) This place has been praised in Thirumurukaruppadai.\(^3\) Saint Arunagirinatherr in his Tiruppugal has devoted eighty six songs in praise of this place. In the seventeenth century Kumaraguruparar has sung in praise

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\(^1\) G.O.Ms. No.1314, Revenue dated 27\(^{th}\) September, 1986.
\(^3\) Thirumurugu.
of this place in Two hundred and twenty four lines, in his kandarkalivenba, Pakalikutkar in his Tiruchendur pillai Tamil has waft ecstacy of this place. Though this place has been praised in literature ranging upto two thousand years. Besides literature four inscriptions that are found in the carner of first prakara of the temple pointout the antiquity of the place. The Vatteluttu inscription of Maranjadiyan is 1200 years old and refers to the diety as subramanya Bhatarar.

**Name of Tiruchendur**

Tiruchendur reputed for its holines and fertility of the soil has a glorious history in the past and present. Local Lore has it that the name Tiruchendur is a variation of Thiru Senthiloor which means the place of Lord Senthil (one of the names of subramania) The temple is said to have been carved out of a mountain called as “Gandha mardhanam” Evidence of such a mountain is seen in parts of the temple especially the shrine of Lord Vishnu. The devout believe that it was here that Lord Subramania defeated and killed the demon Soorapadman and his forces in their mid ocean fortress known as Veeramahendran. The name Tiruchendur that means the sacred place of Victory is in commemoration of this incident.4

Tiruchendur region is a contry of Sharp contrasts ranging between rich rice lands cropped twice a year and wilderness, of sand yielding little besides palmyras and acacias. More than three quarters of the taluk is unirrigated, of the wetlands more than five sixths derive their supply from the Tamirabarani river through the Melaka leading off at the Marudur anicut and through the

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4 Directorate of Census operations Tamil Nadu (Pub) Temples of Tamil Nadu, Thoothukudi District, Chennai, 2004, p.33.
srivaikuntem South main channel. East of the great kadambatank the channels following the very slight fall of the country, branch South ward a way from the line of the river and the immensity of the labour which has turned sand and palymaras into rice fields. In the northwest of the taluk are a few rain bed tanks very few of which irrigate over 50 acres. The Karumaniyar a fruitful stream of surface drainage assists in the irrigation of about a thousand acres in the south west of the taluk.⁵

Tamiraparani the lifeline of the composite Tirunelvelidistrict originates in Podhigaihills and enters the Thoothukudi district at Marudur in Srivaikuntam taluk. It flows through Vallanadu, Srivaikuntam, Alwar thirunagari, ThenThiruperai, Rajapathi, Eral, Attur and makes confluences with the sea at Punnaikayal. The river flows in the district for a total length of 44.km. Karumaniyar enters the Thoothukudi district at Kariyandi and passes through sattankulam, Uthiramadam, Kudiyiruppu and flows into the sea near Manappadu in Tiruchendur taluk.⁶ The total length of the river in the district in 35 km. and the maximum breath in full swing is sixty meters⁷.

**Settlement at Tiruchendur region**

In Tiruchendur region the early people had settled due to Tamiraparaniriver, Karumaniyar and forest. The water facility has been the basic amenity of the people of past and present beyond doubt the people who settled in Tiruchendur region had never faced any acute water problem. But

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⁵ Pate H.R., Tinnevelly District Gazetteer, 1917, p.496.
⁷ Ibid., p.8.
the course of rivers sometimes created thorny issues among the people due to over flowing particularly during monsoons.

**Historical Region**

Tiruchendurregion sustained and nurtured ancient civilization for many centuries that man can remember. The historical places. Alwarthirunagari, Angamagalam, Tenthirupperai, Tirukkalur, Alagiyemana, Valapuram, Malavarayanattam, Poraiyur Suganthalai, Kurumpur, Nallur, Kayalpattnam, Virapandyapattinam, Speak the historical antiquity and soil fertility of Tiruchendur. The state department of Archaeology and museums and the Archaeological survey of India conducted on elaborate survey in this region. In their half way excavations they found many things in the lower valley of Tamiraparani\(^8\). They asserted that there might have been Dravidian settlement in the region more than 6000 years ago in the iron age\(^9\). The artifacts unearthed in Tiruchendur region were pots, urns, cists, ironspeares, intricately designed bronze were sickles etc., It was during ironage that the people began to live in groups in villages as against their previous nomadic life. Metalsmithy, agriculture, pottery, and weaving were the occupations of the people\(^10\). The pots used by the people were called black and red wars

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8 Caldwell. W. Robert, Sepulchral urns in southern India the Indian antiquary 1877, pp.279-292.
9 Prehistoric antiquities, Tinnevelly, Archaeological survey of Inda, Annual Reports 1902-1903, p.111.
because these pots were coloured in red outside and in black inside and the mouth. The civilization continued upto the sangamage as there are references in the sangam literature about the burial urns. The life of the people of Tiruchendur region during the sangamage may be gleaned from the sangam literature.

**Society**

The Society of Tiruchendur taluk was divided into various castes on the basis of profession. A look at the cross section of the people of Tiruchendur at present would reveals combination of different religious faith living in harmony. Brahmins, Vellalas, Yadavas, Naidus, Chettis, Maravars, Nadars, depressed class people and parathavas are Hindus inhabiting the land. Christians are living in considerable number sand they have subsets namely catholic and protestants, Muslims are found in considerable numbers and trade remains their main profession.

**Economy**

Agriculture is the main occupation of Tiruchendur people. They are hard working and have a good knowledge of local conditions of rain seasons menuring and rotation of crops. The fertility of soil and availability of irrigation facilities make the people agriculturists. Dams are constructed across the river Tamiraparani. After the construction of Srivaikuntam anicut in 1870 A.D. twenty one thousand and seven hundred and twenty one hectares of lands are receiving the water from Srivaikuntam anicut\textsuperscript{11} South cannal of Srivaikuntam anicut supply the water the tanks in the northern part of

\textsuperscript{11} Reports from Joint Director of Agriculture, Thoothukudi, February, 2012.
Tanks provides water to the cultivatable lands of Tiruchendur region. Paddy, Banana, gingerly and betel Vine are some of agricultural produce Tiruchendur region is famous for betel Vine banana cultivation. Cashuwanut factory, Rice mills, Darangadhara chemicals Salt Industries and Mineral Factory, Merchants purchase the local goods available and transport it to the commercial centers by transport facilities. Batelvine, Banana, Plantain leaf and vegetables are exported to Chennai, through train, bus and Aeroplane. Trade commerce and development of small scale industries add to the growth of Tiruchendur region.

**Education**

Indigenous Patasalas and Madarasas were functioning in this region on individual initiative where traditional system of instruction was imparted in Sanskrit, Arabic and Vernacular languages. The Introduction of English education widely different from the tradition system marked the beginning of many revolutionary changes. The earlier efforts to introduce change in the existing indigenous system were made by missionaries, Private societies and individuals. Compulsory education was introduced in the year 1945. Afterwards there was a study progress in the field of education.

**Religion**

Religion plays an important role in shaping the social life of the people of Tiruchendur region. The people of this region follow three religions. Hinduisms plays a dominant role in Tiruchendur region. During the sangam period they worshipped the forces of nature. The arrival of Aryans marked for reaching changes in their religious outlook. The Hindus were divided into various sects and subsects which exist even today, the boundaries that mark
them are not so rigid always. A lot of Hindu temples are there in Tiruchendur taluk. Regular temple services are properly looked after. During the temple functions people from other regions used the temples together. Due to the prevailing caste system which mostly depends upon the hindu varna system. The Brahmins alone are a plowed to act as preists. This gives the Brahmins preeminent place in the religious field. By getting religious sanction the Brahmins in the bygone centuries occupied key posts in the government.

The religious authority of Brahmins whose superstitious preaching’s and their pre-supporters ill-treatment and non admission of the low caste Hindus into the red Hindu fold in Tiruchendur region have accelerated conversion into Christianity and Islam. By abjuring Hinduism the converts came to conclusion that they could improve their social states.

**Islam**

Islam was another notable religion of this from Seventh century onwards. The Arabs settled in Kayalpattinam as earlier in 633 A.D. The first settlers who were from medina landed here during the period of first caliph abubakker (632) when the first Arab settlers entered Kayal, the Pandyan kingdam was ruled by Kadungon (575 – 600 A.D.)

The First Arab settlers choose the Khosmari area which was called Kayal and constructed the first mosque near the seashore and named it Kadakaraipalli. Kayalpattinam is situated ten kilometers north of Tiruchendur. The Muslim form minority religion in Tiruchendur region. They are most probably the converts from Hinduism. They live in Tiruchendur Arumuganeri, Kayalpattinam, Kulesekharapattinam, Hemalabad, Alvarthirunagari and Attur.
Christianity

In Tiruchendur region there are growing number of Christianity. But they were divided into Roman Catholic and protestants. The parathavar conversion to Roman catholic Christianity took at Kayalpattinam in course of a maritimewar fought between 1527 to 1539 by the Portuguese and Muslim force. In 1542 – 1543 Jesuit father Francis Xavier spread Roman Catholic Christianity in the neighbouring places of Tiruchendur, Virapandian Pattinam, Manapad, Alanthalai, Punnakayal and Periyathalai Fr.Henri Henriquez (1549-1600) succeeded Francis Xavier Heriquez was responsible for planting the seeds of the orientalist movement. In 1567 Henriquez established a Tamil college at Punnaikayal. Anglican Missionary efforts to convert the Nadars began in the Tiruchendur region in 1796 David Sundarandam of Sattankulam converted to Christianity came forward help the missionaries to spread to Christianity in Tiruchendur region David Sundaranandam created first Christian settlement at Muthalur by 1803 there were five thousand Christians David Sundaranandam met with a mysterious death allegedly poisoned by the instigation of the Nadars of Kuttam. After the Death of David in 1816 missionaries began to build model Christian villages with schools at Meignapuram, Christian nagaram and Udengudi. In 841 Robert Caldwell established his mission in Idayankudi south of Sathankulam. At that time of his arrival a mass movement of conversion was started among Nadars.\(^{12}\)

Ruling Dynasties

Tiruchendur region was ruled by many dynasties. The Sangam Pandlyas and Korkai Pandyas ruled the land from 3\(^{rd}\) Century BC to 926 A.D.

The prominent cholakings who served their names in the pages of History are Raja Raja I, Rajendra Chola and Kulotunga I. At the end of twelveth century A.D. Tiruchendur region came under the rule of later Pandyas from 1530 to 1735. Tiruchendur region was ruled by the Madurai Nayaks and then was ruled by and then from 1801 to 1947 was ruled by the English.

**Invasions**

Tiruchendur region through the ages faced many invasions like cholas. Tiruvadi rulers Portuguese Nayaks Dutch and English. The invaders were mostly attracted by the economic prosperity of the region.

**Adjoining places**

Kayalpattinam, Kulasekharapattinam, Attur, Alvarthirunagari, Punnakayal, Tenthirupperai, Manapad and so on are the important and joining towns and villages of these the first two are of historical importance. The rest are well known for their agricultural products and temples.  

**Area and Period of Study**

The present study describes the history of Siva temples in Tiruchendur taluk from Ancient period to the present day. Upto 1911 Tiruchendur was served as the part of Srivaikuntam Taluk than it became the taluk headquarter. Tiruchendur taluk is a country of Sharp contrasts ranging between rich rice land cropped twice a year and wilderness as of Sand yielding little besides palmyras and acacias. More than three quarters of the taluk is unirrigated of the wet lands more than five sixth derive their supply from the Tamiraparani

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13 ARE 1926, No. 413.
through the melakkal leading off at the Marudur anicut and through the Srivaikuntam South main channel. The taluks contains Five unions Tiruchendur, Kulasekarapatinam, Udangudi, Alwarthirunagari and Kayalpatinam Ancient burialurns have been found at Malavarayanattam, Alvarthirunagari, Alagiyamanavalapuram, Tirukkalur. Tentirupperai, Puraiyur, Angamangalam, Suganthalai, Nallur, Kayalpattinam and Virapandiypatnam.

The presence of the ancient Siva temples in Tiruchendur Taluk testify to the antiquity of Hinduism. Tiruchendur, Tentirupperai, Rajapathi, Attur, Sernthapoomangalam, Angamangalam, Kulasekaranpatinam and Thirukkulur are the important centers of Saivism.

The Proposed doctoral thesis “Siva Temples in Tiruchendur Taluk - A Historical study” makes an attempt to bring out the History of Tiruchendur taluk, structure of the temples, origin and development of the temples, epigraphical contribution of the temples, art and architecture, Pujas and Festivals and to make a critical study of services renetered to the temple by the different section of the society.

**Objectives**

The Object of this study is to high light the historical significances of the temples. The origin and growth of the temples, contribution of various rulers to the temples, art and architecture, Sculptures, Pujas and Festivals and role of the temples to the society. Another object is to bringout spiritual and cultural role of the temples among the peoples of this region.
Hypothesis

The following central hypothesis are formulated and tested in this work. Temples created awareness among the people. They give economic impressments in their life give employment to the poor and disadvantaged. Temples are the best tools to make the people to bious and obedience.

Sources for the Study

The primary sources of this study is the epigraphical evidences and contemporary literary works. Archaeological survey of Indias, Annual Reports on Indian Epigraphy 1887-1905, 1959-60, 1961-62 Epigraphia Indica and south Indian inscriptions Vol.V also give information about Devadhana lands and donation allotted to the temples. The Sthalapurana of the temples provides valuable information regarding the festivals, origin of the temples and Pujas and festivals furnish firsthand information. The Administrative records of the temples are found in the office of the Executive officers of the temples in Tiruchendur.

The other important works deserve to be mentioned here are as follows Temples of South India by K.R.Srinivasan, The Colas, A History of South India by K. A. Nilakandasastri, and Temples of Tamil Nadu by R.K. Das, V.O. Chidambaranar District, (Orumpalamsirapum) (Tamil) by S.Sundarrajian. Thennattukovilgal (Tamil) by Radhakrishnapillai. A History of Tinnevelly by R. Caldwell and History of Madurai by K. Rajayyan form an important secondary sources throws a mine of information regarding the construction and general history of the temples
South Indian festivals by P.V. Jagadesa Ayer throw information about pujas and festivals performed in this temples. Medieval literary works like Thiruvaimoli, Kannirchiruthambu are useful to trace the antiquity of Tiruchendur region. Apart from the literary works. Journals and articles contains useful information about the temples. All the available literary works and other sources do not give a full picture of Tiruchendur taluk and its Siva temples in respect of historic, socio, religious, artistic and architectural features. Hence attempt is made in this thesis to examine the history of temples in Tiruchendur taluk in a very detailed manner.

Methodology

Since the present research work is purely ancient temple history, this exclusively muestigates the contribution of society to the Siva temples in the Tiruchendur Taluk. In applies ancient historical methodology like in recording descriptive and field study method.

Chapterization

The present work is arranged into Six Chapter excluding the introduction and conclusion. Introduction Chapter presents a summary to the temple studies objectives Hypothesis, methodology, sources of information, and chapterization.

The First Chapter deals with the Land and People of Tiruchendur taluk. The first few pages are allotted for the description of Tiruchendur taluk and its natural wealth. The other aspects discussed are social organization, Political History of Tiruchendur taluk. Further various religious of the people and their place of worship are also mentioned. Tiruchendur is the Taluk head
quarters. This is a famous Pilgrimage spot as the temple of Lord subramania located here is one of the Six sacred abodes holy to the worshippers of Lord subramania. The town attracts lakhs of pilgrimage every year. Tiruchendur taluk is one of the eight taluks of Thoothukudi district. It comprises of nine town panchayats and forty seven revenue village. Out of twenty Siva temples five temples are big temples.

The Second Chapter deals with the “Structure of the Siva temples of Tiruchendur taluk.” Siva Kozhndheeswarar and Sri Anandavalli Amman temple of Tiruchendur is an ancient one. The temple is also called Melakovil or the upper temple. Narasinganadhaeswarer temple is situated at Angamangalam. Cherachola pandeeswarar alias Srikasiviswanathar temple of Tirukkalur. Kailasanthar – Alagiaponnammal temple of Tentirupperai, Somanather and Somasundari temple, Attur. Kailasanathar temple and Soundaranayagi temple at Sernathaboomangalam Srichidambaraeswarar Temple and Srikanchi Vijayakachikondapandeeswarar temple at Kulasekarapattinam. Vast have impressive complex of structures enclosed by high walls around occupying a rectangular first prakara and outer prakara. The temple epigraphs mention the date of construction and the person responsible for the same. Early structures of the temples were constructed by the early pandyas. Later cholas, later pandyas and Nayak rulers expanded them by Various structural improvements.

The Third Chapter deals with the “Art and Architecture of Siva Temples in Tiruchendur taluk” Sivakoluntheiswarar temple of Tiruchendur has the architectural impact of Medieval Pandyas, Cholas, later Pandyas and Nayaks. It has two prakarams. Somanather somasundari ambal temple of
Attur has four Prakarams. Kailsanathar – Soundaranayaki temple – Sernthapoomangalam has Arthamandapa Kodimaramandepa Panthal Mandapa and Soundara Nayakhi Shrine.

The Fourth Chapter deals with the **Pujas and Festivals of Tiruchendur taluk temples.** Pujas and Festivals are performed in accordance with Siva Agamas Six times Pujas and fourteen festivals are celebrated in these temples. Here various popular and historical festivals like Tiruvathirai and car festivals are vividly describes. Royal donation and Kattalais are discussed separately here as to bringout the specialty of these temples. The religious and cultural activities of the people are also discussed.

The Fifth Chapter deals with the **Administration of Tiruchendur taluk temples.** In the early Pandya period temples were administered by the Village Assembly. During the Chola period Temples were administered by the Mahasabhas and the members of Chathurvetthi mangalam. With the act of 1951 Tiruchendur Taluk temples were come under the control of executive officers of Hindu Religious endowment Board.

The Sixth Chapter deals with the “**Role of the temples in the society.**” Various sections of the people render their valuable services to the temples, the role of Saiva Brahmins, Cowherds, Chettiar, Musicians and artists in the temples are vividly mentioned. This chapter also mentions the temples properties and various me measurement.

Conclusion chapter describes the following research findings of the study. The inscriptions of Early pandyas later Colas, later pandyas and Nayak rulers of the temples helps to assign the date of construction of various structures of the temples. The existing main structure of the temples are
assignable to the early years of pandyas. The research reveals the past ancient greatness of temples of Tiruchendur taluk and their role in the development of Savism in South India. The epigraphs of the temple study reveals the socio, economic condition of society and various verities of endowments granted to the temple and various verities of endowments granted to the temple by then rulers of Tamil country and the common folk of the society endowed many kinds of the endowments for the maintenance of the temple. The most important festivals both from the Historical and religious points of view of those temples is the chithirai festival of Tamil month of chithirai. The Pujas and festivals performed in the temples play aviated role in linking the people with the temples and instill bhakthi in the minds of people and devotees. These temples have their impact in every walk of the, life of people.