

NALLUR KANDASWAMY TEMPLE



Mudaliyar Kula Sabanathan



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BY

MUDALIYAR KULA. SABANATHAN

Jaffna, the Queen city of the North abounds in many ancient shrines. One of the most important shrines is in Nallur, the ancient capital of the Kings of Jaffna. In the middle of the 15th century Sri Sangabo Bhuvanekabahu alias Sapumal Kumaraya alias Senpahapperumal was reigning in Jaffna as the Viceroy of King - Emperor Parakramabahu VI of Kotte. The name Kotte is the Singhalese for the Tamil term Kottai (கோட்டை) which was built by Alagakonara. Senpahapperumal, before he ascended the throne of Ceylon at Kotte as Bhuvaneka Bahu VI, while at Jaffna built a Temple in Jaffna and dedicated it to Kandaswamy or Lord Katragama Muru-

kan. This Temple is now known as Nallur Kandaswamy Temple. The Jaffna Kings, who styled themselves as Arya Chakravarthis, actually came from South India. The recent thesis submitted by my friend Dr. S. Pathmanathan, Lecturer in History at the University of Ceylon, Peradeniya, states that the Arya Chakravarthis came from the suburb of Sevvi-rukkai in the District of Ramnad, South India. (vide the Journal "CINTANAI" published by Dr. Indrapala, B. A., Ph. D., Lecturer in History, University of Ceylon, Peradeniya-Vol 3 No. 1, January 1970). The Jaffna Kings built four temples around the main Kandaswamy Temple viz, Veilugantha Pillaiyar Temple in the East, Veeramakali Amman Temple in the West, Sattanathar Temple in the North and Kailaya Nathar Temple in the South.

My friend Muhandiram E. P. Rasiyah in an article to the Jaffna Hindu Organ on "Nallur Kandaswamy Temple" (Hindu Organ of 25-8-61 and 1-9.61) refers to the date of the Temple and Founder as follows:

"It may be safely assumed that the original Temple was built between 1450 A. D. and 1500 A. D. and a Tamil by the name of Sapumal Kumaraya alias Senpahapperumal, who ascended the throne in Jaffna under the name

of Bhuvanekabahu with the Sinhalese title of 'Sri Sanga Bodhi' was the founder of the Temple. He is said to have constructed a town Yalpanam and built a temple at Nallur".

The Kattiyam or the invocation of blessings on the Founder of the temple contains the following blessings to Sri Sangabodhi Buvanekabahu; "Sriman Maharajathi Rajaya Abanda Poomandala Pratiyati Kundara Visrantha Kirthi Gaja Valli, Mahavalli Sametha Subramania Paathara Vinda Janathiruda Sodasa Mahadeva Suriyakula Vamsothbava Sri Sangabodhi Buvaneka Bahu Sumuha"

The great Saivite Reformer of Jaffna, Sri la Sri Arumuka Navalar, who hails from Nallur, in one of his articles on Nallur Kandaswamy Temple states as follows: "The Temple authorities who assert that there is no connection between the custom of the old temple and that of the present temple have rejected the old custom in favour of the new. The whole world is aware that these temple authorities during the annual festival repeat the name of Buvaneka Bahu, the manager of the old temple first, and then the name of Ragunatha Mappanar, the founder of the present temple. Therefore, it is quite evident

that there is definitely a connection between the old temple and the present temple”.

This is one of the instances of the deep knowledge our Navalar Peruman had on any subject that he dealt with. Here he shines as a great scholar in the field of Jaffna History.

I might add here that there is also a very close connection between Nallur, the capital of Jaffna Kings in the North and Nalluruwa in the Panadura area during this period. It will be quite out of place for me to give the details here, as I intend writing a separate article on Sapumal Kumaraya, but I might point out that a descendant of the Royal family of Parakramabahu VI was living at Nalluruwa at the same time. The name Nalluruwa is only a Sinhalese form of the Tamil word Nallur, the capital of the Jaffna Kings.

Here is an interesting letter from the pen of the late historian, Mr. S. J. Gunasegaram, published in the Hindu Organ of 2nd February 1962.

Nallur Temple by S. J. Gunasegaram

“A teen-age Tamil pupil of Royal College called and asked me a few days ago whether it was true that the builder of the Nallur Kandasamy Temple was a ‘Sinhalese’. He had been taught that Sapumal Kumaraya was a

Sinhalese. I had to reply that Sapumal Kumaraya was Elu the pure Sinhalese name by which the Tamil Senathipathy Sempaha-p-perumal, was called. He was the adopted son of Parakrama Bahu VI, a Tamil and a Hindu with a characteristically Pandyan title (பராக்கிரமபாகன். The broad shouldered and valiant rider of the Elephant). His wife's name was Ulagudaya Devi (உலகுடைய தேவி). Their adopted son was naturally called by the Ilavans (Sinhalese) Kumaraya (குமார் ஜயா) a Prince. Parakrama Bahu, Buvaneka Bahu are the Pali - ised forms of the names of Tamil Kings. (Bhuvaneka - புவனேகம்). Portuguese, English and Ceylonese writers have followed the Pali - ised forms in their writings..... A study of the Selalibini Sandesa of Sri Rahula will show that Parakramabahu VI, his wife and his adopted son were Hindus, though as rulers the Hindu Tamil Kings patronised Buddhism.

H. W. Codrington in his "Short History of Ceylon" says that Sapumal Kumaraya was not only a Tamil but a great poet as well.

Mailvagana Pulavar, the author of "Yalpana Vaipava Malai", relates a very interesting incident about Bhuvanekabahu: "Singai Ariya Maharajah and the minister Bhuvanekabahu visited Keerimlai, where they bathed in the sacred waters, worshipped at the shrine of Siva, and arranged for the administration of the temple to be brought under state control. Then they went to the Kandaswamy Temple

(Maviddapuram) and were the guests of Sinnamanaththullan the son of Chidambara Dikshitar, the son of Periya - manaththullar. Such was the excellence of the great repast that Bhuvanekabahu sang extempore a stanza in praise of each article of food served on the occasion. Here are two:

“The refreshing rice meal now given by Sinnamanaththullan to be partaken by the king and his attendants can be compared only to the Ambrosia granted of old to the Gods”

“Had the Gods but known the excellent taste of the liquid food prepared by Sinnamanaththullan they would not have cared to take the trouble of churning the ocean with the mountain”.

The original temple was destroyed by the Portuguese. It was rebuilt by Don Juan Rangunatha Mappana Mudaliyar during the latter part of the Dutch rule in Jaffna. It is now managed by one of the descendants, Kuha Sri. Kumaradas Mappana Mudaliyar. This temple is well known for its orderliness and the regularity by which ceremonies are performed.

Don Juan Mappana Mudaliyar was then an Officer of the Jaffna Kachcheri under the Dutch Government. It is about 200 years old and was intended to serve as a madam to preach Kandapuramam. It was for this reason

that it was built without the usual pinnacle or Vimana, as its very sight was enough to induce the people in authority to level the building to the ground. The idol Vel is placed in the holy of holies. Even today the Vel is being worshipped.

The annual festival takes place in July and August and occupies a period of 25 days.

- 1st Day Flag hoisting Festival
commencing at 12 noon.
- 10th Day Mancham Festival
commencing at 8 p. m.
- 18th Day Karthigai Festival
commencing at 8 p. m.
- 19th Day Kailasavaganam Festival
commencing at 8 p. m.
- 22nd Day Thendauthapany Festival
commencing at 5-15 p. m.
- 23rd Day Sapparam Festival
commencing at 8 p. m.
- 24th Day Ratham Festival (Car Festival)
commencing at 8 a. m.
- 25th Day Theertham Festival
commencing at 4-30 p. m.
- 26th Day Poongavanam Festival
commencing at 6-30 p. m.

The annual Festival attracts large crowds from all parts of the Island.

The beautiful architectural feature which strikes any visitor to the temple is the imposing tower or gopura on the eastern main entrance and also the tower at the southern entrance facing the niche, where the Arumnga Swami is installed. Important events in the life of Lord Murugan are depicted in masonry. The peal emanating from the big bell of the temple invites the attention of pilgrims due to its rare quality of musical tone. Brahmin priests perform the poojas at this temple, whereas the traditional kapurala performs the religious ceremonies at Kathirgamam.

The Municipality and the Department of Health services spare no pains in keeping the temple premises clean during the festival season.



NALLUR MANCHAM



10th Day Festival