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## ANCIENT JAIN TRADITION IN KANNIYAKUMARI DISTRICT – AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*Kanniyakumari District is having temples of great antiquity and cultural importance. Temples also functioned as a source of history. Music and dance formed a regular part of the temple festivals. Educational institutions were also run by the temples The South Indian temples have always played a vital role in the religious, social, cultural and economic life of the people.. Jainism spread throughout India and also overseas. In course of time hundreds and thousands of people joined Jainism due to its simplicity Jains follow the teaching of 24 Jains who are known as Tirthakaras.*



**KEY WORDS:** Jains, Tirthakaras, Religion, Pilgrimage, Worship, Hindu, Buddhism,

### INTRODUCTION

Cape Comorin is one of the most sacred centers of pilgrimage to the Hindus. In 1977 a group of Dimbaras Jains from north India visited Chitharal. The ancient tamil literature such as Naladiyar, Nanmani-Kandikai and Thirukadikam, have references about that Jainism has flourish in Chitalar, Thirunandikarai and Nagercoil . The worship of foot-prince is a common feature in Jainism.

### NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY

Temple is a place of worship. A sacred house of gods and goddesses, it catered to the religious needs of the people and provides a link between man and god and the earthly life and the divine life. Kanniyakumari District is having temples of great antiquity and cultural importance. Temples also functioned as a source of history. Music and dance formed a regular part of the temple festivals. Educational institutions were also run by the temples The South Indian temples have always played a vital role in the religious, social, cultural and economic life of the people. In this context, it is possible to bring in to light the unique nature of the famous **Ancient Jain Traditions in Kanniyakumari Distri.**

### OBJECTIVE OF THE STUY

1. To evaluate ancient Jain tradition in Kanniyakumari district
2. To sketch the present conditions of ancient Jain temples
3. To narrate historical importance of the temple

#### 4. To analyse cultural contributions of the temple

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted in the present study is analytical, descriptive and interpretative reflection. In the preparation of the present study the following sources including both *primary* and *secondary* sources.

Materials required for the present study

Archives record

Interview

A Note book

A pencil or pen

A camera

A marker or Black Sharpie

### JAIN TRADITION IN CHITHARAL

Chitharal is a village situated about 8Kms to the north west of Kuzhithurai formerly the headquarters of Vilavancode Taluk in the Southern division of Travancore. The hill was a sacred centre for all devout Jains and thousands came yearly on pilgrimage. The cave temple at Thiruchcharanathumalai is divided into three chambers. The presiding deity in Padmasana posture under a trip umbrella in the central chamber is Mahavira. The nude image stands Bhagavathi in the place of Padmavathi. On the haging rock north of the cave temple are carved a number of figures of Jain Thirthankaras and of Yakshi Padmavathi devi..



### THIRUNANDIKARA TEMPLE

Thirunandikara cave temple is situated in the Northwestern part of Kanniyakumari district. The rock cut cave temple at Thirunandikarai is on the southern slopes of the hill. It consists of a varanda with supporting pillars. One small chamber contained on image. A rectangular hall is found in front of a sanctum Santorum. The Jains had rock cut temple for worship because they believed that in such places the devotees will feel the presence of God.



There are 11 inscriptions found at Thirunandikarai.. The Huzur office plate which belongs to King Vaniguna, Ay king added a lady member of the royal family named Muunigansenthi embraced Jainism in the presence of Virananthiadi a Jain monk. The inspiration on the eastern wall of the rock cut cave temple which belongs to the 10<sup>th</sup> year of Chola king Raja Raja I. It records the grand given to the temple for the celebration of Aipasi sathyam a birthdays of the king.

### NAGARAJA TEMPLE

Nagaraja temple in Nagercoil town in Kanniyakuamri districts once an important jain centre. The Ancient city took its name Nagercoil from the five headed serpent shrine of Nagaraja which is situated in the heart of the present town.



The garbhagraham is attached over and should be left alone. The two rooms in the front are built granite and terraced. The serpent's she of Nagercoil, which is considering being a Hindu temple as originally a Jain one.

The Nagaraja temple was actually a jain temple. From one of the inscription found in the temple, we can say that the temple pass in to the hand of the Hindus at the time of its reconstruction and renovation in the year (696 M.E.) 1520 A.D. the archaeologists the government of Kerala

remarks that the remnants of a large colony of Jains are seen in the temple vicinity. It was converted as a Hindu – Nager temple.

Twenty years ago K.V Soundarajan found six Jain images in worship in this temple and two brass image of later period depicting Parsvanadha and Yakshi Padmavathi Devi standing posture. the gate way to the temple seen now in typical Kerala style it is called, “ Mahameru Malikai”. But it has its connection with Jain mythology.

### Kurandi

Kurandi is small village seven miles north east of Nagercoil in the Kanniyakumari district. The name Kurandi is derived from word Kurandu a kind of plant available there in plenty. In inscriptions the named as Thirukurandi’ it was once a sacred place for the Jains.



On the southern side of the village, there is ruined temple surrounded by paddy fields.. The temple facing east has only three rooms built with granite stones. Small red- bricks are used for the construction of the Gopuram. In the third room there is a granite stone with the carvings of the Holy Fest of Korakkad Stone. Stone images of Nagas are found on either side of holy feet.

The anecdote connected with the origin of the temple is an interesting one. It is said that the sage Korakkar once went to Suchindram without dress to worship Thanumalayam. One seeing Korakkar is nakedness, the people of Suchindram drove him away. He then came to Kurandi where he did his penance for a number of days and breathed his last. Later on the people of Kuandi, especially those who followed Jainism, constructed a temple in memory of Korakkar at Kurandi. His Samadhi and the shrine dedicated to him were then visited by a number of Jain devotees.

There are two schools of sculpture in the District, are the Jain and the Brahminical. Most of the Jain Sculpture are in the form of bas reliefs. The twenty four Thrithakaras of Jainism are seen represented ways of bas reliefs in temple, the notable once being the sculptures at the Bhagavathi Amman Temple Thiruchcharattumalai where the Jain iconography features are very district.

### CONCLUSION

The legendary of Jainism is commendable. There is cultural legend in the form of scriptures, sculptures, paintings, and art. Jainism began to decline after the arrival of Thiru Gnana Sambanthar in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The Jains were forcefully converted into Sivaites and Vaishnavites.

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