



HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF NATHAM VILLAGE IN DINDIGUL DISTRICT– A STUDY

Dr. M. PETCHIAMMAL

Assistant Professor

Department of History

Christopher Arts & Science College (Women)

Soorangudi, Nanguneri Taluk, Tirunelveli - 627 108

Dr. P. SRIDHAR

Guest Lecturer

Government Arts College (Autonomous), Salem – 7.

Abstract

This paper aims to highlight the historical background of Natham village in Dindigul district. Dindigul is one of the thirty-eight districts of Tamil Nadu. Natham is one of the important historic villages in Dindigul District. It was a Hindu settlement in ancient days. Originally this place was called by the ancient people as Eripadai Nallur. This town Natham has different names. Natham is a hamlet of attraction to the visitors, which feeds them with joy both to the mind and soul. They included Erisaimanagar (best trading Centre), Nathamedu (wasteland), Nathathu Medu (Waste upland), Purampokku (Wasteland), and finally Natham (Wasteland). Therefore, it is inferred that Natham was only a barren land but should have been a big trading Centre.

Introduction

Dindigul District was carved out of the composite Madurai district in September 1985 as per G.O Ms.No.1255, The New district was named after the former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu (late) Thiru. C.N. Annadurai as “Dindigul Anna District”. The district was renamed at various points in time since 1985. It is presently named as Dindigul district from 1.07.1997. Natham is

situated thirty-seven kilometers north of Madurai. The village gives its name to the scattered, “Natham Hill” which surrounds it, and to the “Natham Pass” which leads to Madurai between the Alagarmalai and the Sirumalais. Natham is a part of Natham Taluk in Dindigul district. Earlier Natham was part of Melur Taluk of Madurai District. Later it was merged with the Dindigul district. The area of this taluk is 312.75 sq. km. Natham is located on the eastern side of the Sirumalai Estates. The abundant fertility found in the Sirumalai hills and the surrounding forest areas has rendered the inhabitants to live here in Natham. Natham Taluk is part and partial Twenty-one Village Panchayats including the Natham Town Panchayat. Natham Taluk is divided into two groups. One is the Natham North District Council and the other one is the Natham South District Council. This town is well known not only to the Tamils but also to the Hindus in general.

Origin of the Term Natham

There are many interpretations regarding the origin and etymology of the term Natham. It is popularly believed that the name Natham has come from the word Nathathar. Nathathar was one of the poets of the ancient period. He wrote a book on Tamil grammar. The name of the book is Nathamthatam. Finally, this word came into vogue as Natham. Secondly, it is also pointed out that the origin of the name of the place is based on one legendary story. This place was one of the main areas for engaging war activities in ancient times. Due to continuous war, it is believed that the enemies fully destroyed this place. Consequently, the empty place was called purampokku. The Tamil word “Porampokku” means it was not owned by any person. Another meaning of the word Porampokku is Natham. The word Natham includes many of the additional names located in varied places of Tamil Nadu. There are as follows: Pillayar Natham, Kotta Natham, Vellicha Natham, Sukka Natham, Palava Natham, Putha Natham etc. Now this place is called Natham only.

Early History of Natham

The area of Natham was included with many hills and a large forest area. In ancient times, different types of rulers over the Natham region. The place of Natham despite a barren land was a significant commercial centre for the ancient Cholas and Pandyas. Natham had links politically, economically, and militarily with Madurai and Uraiyur. The traders called the names of Natham as Erisai Manager, for the flourishing trade carried out there. The Kallar tribe has mainly dominated this area. During the time of Thirumalai Nayak, the Kallars of this region joined together and refused to pay tax to the Government. To suppress the Kallar menace Thirumalai Nayak specially utilized the great service of Madurai Veeran in Natham. Lingamma Nayak the popular Nayak of this region contributed much and created this area convenient for human settlement. These contributions of Lingamma Nayak are still remembered by the people of this region.

Natham was under the control of the Nawabs of Arcot, Khan Sahib, the Governor of Madurai raised the “Port at Natham to prevent the direct onslaught of Mysorians”. Natham served as the communication link center for the Britishers and the insurgents during the South Indian Rebellion in 1800-1801. During the 19th Century, the village possessed a port and was a regular halting place between Trichinopoly and Madurai and it was then the headquarters of the chieftains. Nowadays Natham is a developed town and is going to emerge as a Municipality soon.

Geography

Natham is geographically linked with Dindigul. It is a tropical area and has a fairly higher degree of temperature for the major part of the year. Being a rain shadow area, the rainfall is not only scanty but also irregular. It is above thirty inches a year. The northeast monsoon supplies most of the rain from November to January while the southwest monsoon rests in June and July.

The Thirumanimutharu is the principal river. This area is fully occupied by the hills and the large trees. The soil is black cotton or red and alluvial. Granite and clay occur in all places. The fertility of the soil together with moderate rainfall gave scope for good vegetation all over this area. This place is overstocked with sheep cattle and buffalo. Since this area mainly depends on irrigation, it is capable of raising double-crop agricultural operations. Many kinds of fruits have been sent from Natham to the surrounding places of Dindigul and Madurai District. The name of the settlement on the southern side of Natham is Kovilpatty (the ancient temple is located here) and the northern side is called Natham town. The other sides are covered with paddy fields, sugarcane, farms, and banana plantains with land goods cultivation are the mainstay of the farming community in this area.

Life Style of the People

The people of Natham do not identify with any specific characteristics of their town. In fact, this is the confluence of different religions and castes. The taluk represents a mixed culture of Hindu, Christian, and Muslim as a result of political changes. The monuments around the Natham such as the temple, the church, and the mosque represent the co-existence of these different religions. There were major occupational groups of agriculture, trading, weaving, and other professions. They could also be divided on a caste basis. The first category comprises Udaiyars, Ambalakarans, Kallars, and Uralis. The Vellalas, an important land owing caste, are divided into twenty endogamous divisions. And the lending sects among them being Kongu Vellalas and Aranattu Vellalas.

Conclusion

Throughout the ages, the entire humanity made concerted efforts to mold the intellectual as well as physical qualities of cultures and civilizations. The multifarious endeavors of those in power and of the ruled, for making innovations, often met with failures and successes,

for maximum profit from human effort. Proper utilization of intellectual capability invited the attention of a growing society and progressive government.

References

1. District Survey Report, Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, p.2
2. G.O. Ms. No.1255 dated 02.09.1985.
3. A. Seyed Mohamed., Natham Oor Varalaru, Newsman Publication, Madurai.2011.
4. Central Ground Water Board, District Groundwater Brochure Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, Government of India Ministry of Water Resources.2008, p.7.
5. C. Sekar, S. Senthilnathan and C. Ramasamy, “Forest Economy of Tamil Nadu”, Agriculture Situation in India, Delhi, September 1995, p.397-398.
6. G.O. Ms. No.482, Revenue Department dated 27.11.2013.
7. ARE 1958, No,486,488.
8. Survey Report of Madurai & Dindigul Provinces 17 December 1817.
9. District Statistical Handbook 2011-2012.
- 10.HR & CE Records.

