



Kilakuyilkudi

Samanamalai (Jain Hill)

The name of the hill itself explains its association with Jainism. This hill lies in the village of Kilakuyilkudi, 15km west of Madurai near Nagamalai Pudukottai village. In this village three important Jain vestiges are found which speak about the existence and flourishing nature of Jainism during 9-10 Century A.D .It is a picturesque place with a lotus pond at the foot- hills of Samanamalai.

Pechipallam and MaadeviPerumpalli

At the top of the hill, a natural water spring is seen along with galaxy of Jain images carved on the face of the rock. This place is called Pechipallam. Pechi is a demi goddess carved on the face of the rock. This place is called Pechipallam. Pechi is a demi goddess found in the villages of Tamilnadu. Pechi is a corrupted form of Yakshi, the attendant lady deity of Jainism. In this rock, sculptures of Mahavira, Parsvanatha and Bagubali (Gomatiswara) are carved. Below every sculpture, inscriptions are also engraved which give the details of the individuals who caused to carve these images. These inscriptions also give the particulars regarding the existence of a residential school at this place and the names of persons who managed the school and the students studied here.

It had a contact with the school which functioned at Kurandi near Aviyur located at Madurai - Aruppukottai main road. Names of some visiting professors from Mulasanga of Sravanabelagola are also engraved on the top most terrace of the hill. A structural temple of Jains called Madevi Perumpalli was constructed at this hill by a Pandyan king Parantaka Viranarayana (860 - 905 AD). Only the stone base is remaining here with an inscription belonging to the same king's period. From this record we come to know the name of the village as Uyirkudi and the hill as Thiruvuruvagam. The name is changed as *Amirthaparakramanallur*. Details of some lands near the village, donated to this Jain temple, is also known from this record.

Settipodavu

One more cave is found behind the Jain hill, (just 200mt away), which is now named by the locals as Settipodavu. Here on the face of the rock, there is a huge image of Mahavira carved as bas-relief. This image looks like a chettiyar (moneylender community of Tamilnadu) and so the name of the cave (Podavu- hole) is called Settipodavu. Inside the cave, there are five sculptures. Among them three represent Mahavira, one Ambika yakshi and another one Kotravai. The last one is very interestingly shown as a fighting scene. The lady figure (Kotravai yakshi) is seated on a lion and ferociously fighting with a man who is seated on an elephant. Below these sculptures are inscriptions which give the names of the persons who carved these images.

Around Madurai eight Jain hills existed and they are mentioned in an ancient verse. Among this eight Samanamalai (Thiruvuruvagam) was very important hill center for Jainism-during8-10CenturyA.D.

-- Dr.V.Vedachalam