

A Study of Madurai Anaimalai Cave Temple

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Received: 15 April 2025; **Revised:** 25 May 2025; **Accepted:** 10 June 2025; **Available Online:** 30 June 2025.

Abstract

In anticipation of a severe famine in their nation, Mauryan King Chandragupta and a group of Jain ascetics led by Sruthakevalin Bhadrabahu moved to Sravanabelagola in Karnataka by the end of the 4th century B.C. They began to spread the Tirthankara faith from this location. Following Chandragupta and Bhadrabahu's deaths, their followers moved south to the Chola and Pandya nations, possibly at the beginning of the third century BC. The early Brahmi engravings found in Madurai, Pasumpon and Tirunelveli Areas demonstrate the relic of Jainism in Tamil Nadu significantly sooner than the second century BC. In all of Tamil Nadu, there are a lot of natural caverns where Jaina monks used to live. These caverns are found amid pleasant environmental elements where the priests resided in stunning confinement, drawing themselves in thought and strict pursuits. Mangulam, Anaimalai, Arittapatti, Alagarmalai, Keelavalavu, Thiruvathavur, Varichiyur, Karungalakkudi, Thirupparankundram, Muthupatti, Kongarpuliangulam, Mettupatti, and Vikramangalam are some of the most important Jain caves in and around Madurai. These caverns address the earliest lithic landmarks in this district, containing the earliest epigraphic records in Brahmi characters that are from the second century B.C to the third or fourth century A.D. They additionally give legitimate proof of the early spread of Jainism in Tamil Nadu. Jainism gained traction, both in rural and royal circles. Gnanasambandar, a great Sivaite and writer of the Devaram had caused thousands of Jaina adherents to be persecuted in Madurai at the beginning of the 7th century A.D. However, Jainism retained its deep roots. Acchanandhi, a well-known Jain ascetic, was able to re-establish schools or Jaina pallis in Samananalai, Kalugumalai, Kurandi, Thirukkattampalli, Uthamapalayam, Aivarmalai, Anaimalai, Arittapatti, Avicheri, and Perumpalli and spread the Jain religion.

Keywords: Anaimalai, Jain, Elephant Hill, Madurai, Dwarapalaka, Narasimha cave temple

Introduction

Madurai's History is more fascinating to study. It is a city of intersections where various faiths have thrived over time. One of the world's ancient religions is Jainism. The temple in India has a long history as both a religious institution and a place of worship. The Hindus and Jains of the south adopted the stone medium between the sixth and seventh centuries A.D. and began excavating rock-cut cave temples. Cutting out rock-cut solid sanctuary structures, and at last structure them of stone. We have a long line of such stone temples that were built in close succession and continued unbroken for thirteen centuries. They are scattered across the peninsula in thousands, with the majority of them still in use in the far south. The Jains had by then settled their sangams at Madurai. With the revival of Jainism in the eighth century A.D., aside from the old ones, a few new centres sprang up in the Pandya domain. Notable among them are those at Anaimalai, Arittapatti, Kilavalavu, Kilakuyilkudi, Muttupatti, Chettipodavu, and Tirupparankunram. Thirupparankundram, Samanarmalai, Kongarpuliyankulam, Vikkiramangalam, Anaipatti, Anaimalai, Anaipatti, Meenakshipuram (Mangulam), Arittapatti, Alagarmalai, Karungalakudi, Keelavazhavu, and

Thiruvathavoor, Kunnathur, and Thirumalai were all popular Jain abodes for Jain Madurai City neighboring villages. The Anamalai cave temple in Madurai and the development of Jainism are the subjects of this paper.

Growth of Jainism

Vardhamana Mahavira was born in Kundagrama, close to Vaishali, in 599 B.C. He became Jaina, which means "*the conqueror*," and Mahavira, which means "*great hero*," in the thirteenth year of his asceticism. Ahimsa, or simple living, is central to Jainism. Jainism is a way of life that is based on the teachings of 24 Tirthankaras, the last and most important of whom was Lord Mahavira. Rishabha served as the first Tirthankara, and Parshvanath was the twenty-third or penultimate Tirthankara. The founder of a tirtha, or fordable passage across the sea of interminable births and deaths (samsara), is referred to by the name Tirthankara. The various names given to tirthankaras include "*Teaching Gods*," "*Ford-Makers*," "*Crossing Makers*," and "*Makers of the River-Crossing*." His teachings had an impact on Bimbisara and Ajatashatru, the Magadha rulers. The three tenets of Jainism that are collectively referred to as the Tri-ratnas are right faith, right knowledge, and right behaviour. This new religion was supported by rulers like Dhana Nanda, Chandragupta Maurya, and Kharavela in North India. Various adherents of Jainism went with them, and they settled down in Karnataka. The sculpture of Bahubali, known as Gomateswara, 57 feet at Shravanabelgola in Karnataka, is the tallest Jaina sculpture at any point cut out in India.¹

Jainism split into two branches, the Digambaras and the Svetambaras. In the 7th century A.D., Jainism was one of the major religions in the Tamil region. Mahendravarman, the Pallava king, was a Jain. He became a Saivist after Appar influenced him. There are numerous Jain temples in the area known as Jaina Kanchi, which is close to the current town of Kanchi. The Thiruparuthikundram temple is one of the most important. On the ceiling, Mahavira's life story is painted. Jainism appears to have had more suitable homes in the Karnataka, Tamilnadu and Kerala regions. In their arrangements, their strict designs, especially their sanctuaries, didn't contrast much from those of the Hindus, a component that has persisted from that time to the current day. The gods or objects that were installed for worship and the appropriate symbols that formed the decorative elements of such temples were the only things that distinguished the credal distinction. As in Guntupalle and Sankaram, both cut-in and cut-out places of worship were dug into the softer rocks of the Eastern Ghats, which are located in the northern coastal districts of Andhra and the southern districts of Orissa. The Jain caves of Khandagiri and Udayagiri are two examples in Orissa. Because the softer trap rocks were easier to work with than the harder granites or gneisses, this area was chosen. The initiation of this method of rock-cut sanctuaries for the Hindu and Jain Divine beings started with the approaching to force of three extraordinary domains in the landmass the Chalukyas of Vatapi (Badami) in the Deccan area, with their security part of the Chalukyas of Vengi (or the Eastern Chalukyas) on seaside Andhra, the Pallavas of Kanchi on the eastern coast, and the Pandyas of Madurai in the far south. Not only were these three powerful kingdoms at odds politically, but they were also at odds when it came to funding for literature, architecture, and art. The three centuries that spanned the rock-cut phase of Hindu and Jain temple architecture also coincided with the great revivalist movements of the Hindus and the ongoing hold that the Jain sects held on certain segments of the population. The bhakti cult was established at the beginning of the seventh century, following the revivalist movements of the Hindus.²

The Saiva and Vaishnava hymnists, Nayanmars, and Alvars who lived in the Tamil land became enmeshed in Vedic practices and travelled the entire region, visiting shrines,

singing hundreds of devotional hymns in Tamil, and rousing the populace. This additionally brought about the transformation of the fanatic Saiva ideologies of the Kala Mukhas, Pasupatas, Mahesvaras, Saktas and such; it restricted areas of strength that Jainism had on individuals. Because of the support it received from affluent merchant groups and kings, Jainism had long held sway in the Telugu and Kannada regions. The various guruchchhas spread into the Tamil and Telugu regions from the Kannada region, which remained the centre of South Indian Jainism. An example of a Jain cave temple built between the eighth and ninth centuries is the well-known rock-cut cave temple at Sittannaval in the Pudukkottai area (Tiruchirapalli district) that houses the well-known early mural paintings in fresco. This, as per a long section engraving related to it, was re-decorated by a specific Ilan Gautaman nom de plume Madurai Asiriyar and a primary mukhamandapa included front, all in the rule of Avanipasekhara Sri Vallabha Pandya (c. 815-862). On the hind wall of the shrine and in the niches on the lateral walls of the mandapa in front, there are bas-relief Jain tirthankara sculptures. The facade pillars of this cave temple are supported by taranga corbels, making it a typical Pandya version of a Mahendra-style cave temple.³

Anaimalai - Elephant Hill

Anaimalai is a town in the Madurai North Taluk of Madurai district, which is situated around 14 km. East of Madurai, the slope seems to be a situated elephant (anai), and it is called Anaimalai. Tiruvilaiyadal Purana states about the Anaimalai.⁴ Anai Malai in the Madurai Region is viewed as one among the eight consecrated Jain slopes in Tamil Nadu by the Digambara Sect.⁵ A characteristic cave with cut stone beds engraved in Brahmi discusses Jain presence in the first-second century A.D.; however, it arrived at its pinnacle just in the ninth century A.D., at the point when various devout enthusiasts contributed their parasite in forming it into a Jain settlement. Anaimalai is a solid block of gneiss that is almost three kilometres in length and approximately 90 meters in height. It gets its name from its resemblance to a massive figure of an elephant that is reclining. This can be seen in the predominance of images that are found in the Jain cult.⁶

Anaimalai rocks are more diverse than any other rock in Madurai. Anaimalai is known as a rock museum of Madurai because it houses a Jain residence, a Hindu temple known as Narasinga Perumal temple, a rock-cut memorial known as Ladamani temple, Jain beliefs, and frescoes. A Tamil Brahmin inscription from the first century AD refers to the hill as Ivakunram, or elephant hills.⁷

Anaimalai – A Great Centre of Religious Harmony

The drip ledge of a natural cavern on the terrace of the hill contains a significant historical record. The document is dated to the first century CE and is written in ancient Brahmi characters. For the Jain mendicants' use, more than 20 rock beds were extracted from this cavern. The hill is given the name Iva kundram in this record. Ivam means elephant in Prakrit, and kundram means hill. Eri Arithan and Aratta Kayipar made these rock beds and gave them to the Jains. During the 7th century CE, Jainism in the entire Pandya nation experienced a setback as a result of the Bhakthi movement and the serious efforts of Thirugnana Samanthal. Anaimalai is also mentioned by Thirugnana Sampanthal as a powerful Jain's home in one of his devotional songs, Devaram. But when the time was right, the Jains got used to living on these hills again, with the help of the Pandya rulers at the time and the locals. Both the Saivites and the Jains' minds had changed during this time. Saivites were prepared to lend their assistance for the Jains to reintroduce their strict landmarks, and the Jains additionally were prepared to acknowledge the symbol of love and confirmation of ladies in their strict crease similarly. So, from the 9th to the 10th century CE, the Jains carved

a plethora of Jain images, which were favoured by royal officers, Brahmin sabhas, and private individuals. The figures of Mahavira, Parsvanatha, and Ambika yakshi can all be seen today in good condition. The names of the people who cut each sculpture are revealed by the inscriptions below it. The murals on the sculptures provide ample evidence that Anaimalai was also a treasure trove of fine arts. In addition to teaching people about their religion, Jain monks educated them by turning their cave homes into schools, providing sick people with medical care, and providing needy people with shelter. As a result, this location is a symbol of religious tolerance and a hub for academic fine arts.⁸

At the same time, important Vedic religions like Saivism and Vaisnavism had also established roots here. This kind of penetration was carried out by all religions throughout Tamil Nadu in places of significance for other sects. Similarly, two cave temples were excavated at Anaimalai, one dedicated to Lord Muruga and the other to Narashimha-Vishnu. In their respective religions, these two Gods are regarded as vibrant and heroic in their actions. One Marankari, a minister to Pandya King Varaguna I (768 AD–815 AD), constructed the Narashirmha cave in 770 C.E. The carving of the Murugan cave, which is now known as the Ladan temple, occurred almost simultaneously. The Narashirmha cave temple was frequently visited by the area's previous rulers. As a result, Anaimalai has been a significant centre for religious harmony and a cultural fortress for the past two thousand years.

Jain Sculptures in Anamalai

This hill has a natural rock shelter on its slopes. This shelter's façade has a height of 2.3 meters, contains a sculptural panel with a length of 5.5 meters, and the Tirtankara image has a height of 1 meter. Eight sculptures face west. Parswanatha and Bahubali in kayotsarga, Mahavira in ardhapadmasana, and Yakshi Ambika in sukhasana are all examples of these sculptures.⁹ The eight Vatteluthu inscriptions of Maransadaiyan alias Varaguna I, which date from the 9th to the 10th centuries C.E., can be found below the Tirthankara sculpture. These inscriptions are from the 9th century C.E. According to the first, Anathi was a person who donated a Jaina sculpture to Kalavali Nattu Aniyana. The second mentions that Dhina Kalathar was in charge of safeguarding the Jaina sculptures. The third one discusses the Porkottuk Karanathar's assistance. Attchanandi's donation and Narasinga Mangalathu Sabhayar's protection are described in the fourth inscription. Cheliya Pandi donated the Iyakkar sculpture, according to the fifth inscription. The sixth inscription details Satan's gift to Venbunattu Ambiraiyana. The donation made by Valathirukkai Nattu Senthavan is mentioned in the seventh script, and Puravuvarithinaikalathar's protection of the sculpture is mentioned in the eighth inscription. Another Tirtankara, identified as Mahavira, can be seen facing north on the same rock. In this example, Mahavira is sculpted in ardhapadmasana with three umbrellas over his head. Lime plaster covers it, and there are traces of painting fragments there. Somewhat away from this Tirtankara picture, a stone cut, privately known as Ladenkoil, is found.¹⁰

Ladankoyil

The Subrahmaniya cave sanctuary is privately known as Ladankoyil, which is located on the western slope of the Anaimalai. It is found 60m south-west of Narasimha cave sanctuary. The southern portion of the hill, where the hill scrapes down almost uniformly without being obscured by loose boulders, is where the Ladankoyil is scooped out. The Ladankoyil rock-cut cave was nearly dug up at the hill's base. An ardhmantapa and a west-facing garbhagriha make up the Lodankoyil. The rock-cut ceiling is 2.15 meters high. An important 1.5 m tall adhisthana is used to scoop out the entire grabhagriha, with upana,

kumudam, kandan and pattika. On either side of the garbhagriha's entrance, two pilasters rise above these adhistana. The shape of those pilasters is square. On the pilaster capitals, ganas are chiselled out. In addition, peacocks and cocks are depicted on the right and left sides of the entrance to the garbhagriha, respectively.

On the back mass of the garbhagriha, Ruler Muruga and his associate Valli models on the basal stone are found. The images of Lord Muruga have a height of 1.2 meters. Both Muruga and his associate have two hands. Muruga rests his left hand on his thigh while holding an unidentified object in his right hand. The Muruga design is beautified with channavirapatrakundala and karandamakuta. His associate is situated in the sukhasana with two hands. While her left hand rests on her thigh, her right hand is holding a flower bud. Through the garbhagriha's entrance, a channel was constructed to drain the abhiseka water. The garbhagriha is flanked by two Dwarapalaka pictures. A 4.14 mt x 1.3 mt rectangular ardhmantapa stands in front of the garbhagriha. A seated devotee and an animal are depicted on the ardhmantapa's southern and northern walls, close to the Dwarapalakas. At the ardhmantapa's entrance, there are two pillars and two pilasters. The shafts of the pillars are octagonal in the middle and square or saduram at the top and bottom. The square portion of the pillar is decorated with floral medallions. The capitals of the support points are enlivened with trangapothika, a normal Pallava highlight. At a height of 1.50 meters from the base, the entire rock cut complex was excavated, which could be referred to as upapidam. As a result, there are steps on both the northern and southern sides of the rock cut. A makara theme is on both sides of the means. A 7mtx.5mt sitting Lakulisa with two hands facing west and carved like a kudu is in front of the rock cut on the upapidam. It is topped by a well-developed kapota. His left hand is in kadihashta, while his right hand is holding danda. The jatabhara udarabanda and patra kundala could be seen on the figure.¹¹

Dwarapalaka

On the northern side of the garbhagriha's entrance, in a 1.69 m x 0.80 m rectangular niche, a Rishi dressed as a Dwarapalaka is depicted. He is depicted with two hands in a standing position. His left hand is in kadihashta, and his right hand is holding a bouquet. He wears an undergarment to cover his genital organ and without any upper or lower pieces of clothing. Beautifully found is Jatabhara. The face is exceptionally exhausted. The figure did not permit identification of Yajanopavitha. The figure lacks any other ornaments, so expect hara. On the South devakoshta to the garbhagriha's 1.67mtx.80mt entrance, another Rishi or Dwarapalaka can be found. He is holding two hands while standing in the Ardha Vaidasthiga Stanagam posture. He has a slight head tilt toward the doorway. His right hand holds a bloom bud, while the left hand is in kadihashta. Wavy horizontal lines are shown on his lower garment. He has a long beard and a jatabhara. Around his left shoulder is a thick band of yajnopavita.¹²

Narasimaha Cave Temple

Minimal away from the Ladonkoyil on the western slants of a similar Anaimalai slope, there is one more little stone slice cave committed to Ugra Narasimaha. An ardhmantapa and a west-facing garbhagriha can be found in this rock cut. The garbhagriha has a square shape and measures 2 meters by 2 meters. The garbhagriha is 3 meters tall. On the side and rear wall of the garbhagriha, Ugra Narasimaha is depicted. There is an ardhmantapa in front of the garbhagriha, which measures 5.29 m x 2.15 m. At the ardhmantapa entrance, there are four pillars. The pillars' shafts are square with an octagonal middle section. The sadurams of the pillars lack any floral medallions. The support points are conquered by cut corbels. This rock-cut cave does not contain any dwarapalakas. Façade of

the stone cut has a kapota-like expansion up to 2.5 m, which forestalls the downpour of water. In this rock-cut cave, Ugra Narasimaha is the only sculpture depicting a presiding deity in the garbhagriha. This sculpture by Ugra Narasimha measures 2 meters in height. He is in yogasana with four hands. A yoga patta is tracked down around the knee. Sankha and chakra are held in his upper hands. In Dandahastha, the lower hands rest on the knees. He is addressed as Simhamukha, which means brutal with canine teeth. There is no kritamakuta on his head; in any case, the hair of a lion is shown perfectly around the head. The yajnopavita, hara, keyura, and kadaga all represent him. Two inscriptions that are dated to Maransadaiyan (Varaguna I), the ruler of the early Pandya, can be found on the eastern wall of the ardhmantapa, on either side of the garbhagriha. One of the engravings of Maransadaiyan, dated to 770 C.E., states that the stone cut was exhumed by one Madurakavi, the child of Mara of the Vaidya family and was blessed in kali year 3871, which can be likened with 770 C.E.¹³ Subsequently, from the above record accessible on the mass of the building, it very well may be made sense of that the Narasimaha rock cut was exhumed during the time of Maransadaiyan in the eighth century C.E. by Marangari, who took the title Madurakavi and sanctified it in 770 C.E. As indicated by epigraphical record Marangari uncovered yet he kicked the bucket before blessing. Subsequently, his sibling Maran Eyinan, who was additionally the state leader of Varaguna I, performed sanctification.¹⁴

Conclusion

In addition to serving as a place of worship, Indian temples were also used for education and cultural activities. Our nation's culture and heritage are represented by temples. This may be attributed in large part to the architecture, sculpture, and iconography of Tamil Nadu temples. This piece of writing is helpful to figure out the exceptional upsides of Jainism in Madurai. Aanamalai fact is revealed by several inscriptions, including Tamil Brahmi inscriptions, beds, Vatteluttu, Titanakara images, and excavations of Siva temples (Ladankoyil and Vaishnava temple Ugra Narasimha). Even though the rock-cut caves in Anaimalai were built to honour Siva and Vishnu during the same time as Maransadaiyan, also known as Varaguna I, the caves' artistic features remain unchanged. There is no evidence of Sivism in the Jain cave in Anaimalai, as evidenced by the fact that Jain monuments like Tirupparankundram have not been chipped away. The famous city of the Pandas, Madurai, has a lot to offer tourists. Madurai's Jain Cave Temples are another popular tourist destination. In order to attract more tourists to the Anaimalai Jain cave temples, the government must take a number of measures.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: We thank the anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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