

The Meritorious Work and Services of The Parish Priests To Manalmatha Church

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Abstract:

Manal Matha Church situated KanakkanKudieruppu in Tuticorin District. In 1501 a small church was constructed in KanakkanKudieruppu named ParalogaMatha. This was destroyed by natural destruction which was covered by sand in 1598. This Church was after discovered by SokkanKudieruppu people in 1799.Rev. Fr. Magneline, played a major role in exhuming the sand bound church.He set up the front Mandabam of the church. Rev .Fr. Ignatius built preventive walls to prevent the wind-blown sand from infiltrating into the church.Rev. Fr. Gruez Antony set the floor with marbles. On 6.6.1967 the church got electricity power connection with the steps. The growth and development of the Manal Matha Church lies mainly behind the great works and excellent services of some important parish priests.

Introduction:

Manal Matha Church situated KanakkanKudieruppu in TuticorinDistrict.Red soil in this area was once fullied with natural fertility. This area was ruled by PagaiVenta Pandiyan¹.KanakanKudieruppu peoples who were the followers of St. Thomas.They request their king to build a church.² Pandiyan gave lands to Church.In 1501 a small church was constructed in KanakkanKudieruppu named Paraloga Matha³. This was destroyed by natural destruction which was covered by sand in 1598.⁴This Church was

after discovered by SokkanKudieruppu people in 1799.⁵ They removed the sand from the ParalogaMatha and called the discovered church at Manal Matha Church because it was surrounded by soil and sand. Since the exhumation of the church upto now, the contribution of the parish priests to the development of the church. Today's greater development of the church lies behind their invaluable hardwork, innovativeness and will power to do good services. Below are given the noble works of some important parish priests.

Manal Matha Church :

The Manal Matha Church has been built in a such way that it may Charm the hearts of the people. It stands proudly erract and slately being built of granite and salt stone. The cement base applied to built this church contained the ingredients of time, palm extract, egg, palm cake and a kind of gum.⁶ Which were handly available in that age, the metals stone and sand were carried to the spot of the church by bullocks. The rool of the church has been set up with the lime blates measuring from feets, having wooden beams as base. The doors and pillars are of stone yet, no split, breach or scotch can be seen in side the church.

The outer church under the main church was built by his Excellency Thomas Fernando in 1950.⁷ The credit of decoratively having rebuilt and modernized the sand covered main church goes to Rev. Fr. Ignatius. It was Rev. Fr. Maria Dass who under took the duty of building the upper church a stain case for it and did it beautifully. As a result, devotees four courners had and have an opportunity to visit the church.

Rev. Fr. Magneline:

Rev. Fr. Magneline, played a major role in exhuming the sand bound church. He set up up the front mandabam of the church⁸. He was very much. interested in the development of the church which was smaller witnessed rapid and abnormal development by degrees. He has done a man service towards the church

Rev. Fr. Ignatius:

He took over the parish priest-hood of SokkanKudieruppu in 1937. He was known as 'the devotee of the Mother Mary' by the people⁹. He rebuilt the exhumed

church. He built preventive walls to prevent the wind-blown sand from infiltrating into the church. He promote the elementary school and middle school.

The Manal Matha Church no drinking water facilities. Therefore Rev.Fr. Ignatius had a drinking water wall dug out and them drinking water problem found a solution out¹⁰. He looked after SokkanKudieruppu and the neighbouring village like a mother and commanded great respect, revelence and affaction of the people, during his parish priest hood from 1937 to 1951¹¹. The name and fame of the church spread to the four corners.

During his period, he thatched upper part of the Manal Matha Church with Palmyra leaves with the support of most Rev. Thomas Fernando, he built the outer church seen under main church and a lodge for the pilgrims¹². The devotion of Rev.Fr. Ignatius for Mother Mary, his love and concern for the people, his dedication to service and his sence of duty have paved a strong way for miraculous development of the church and the parish.

Therefore they collected ground rent from sellers and traders during the feast and festival celebration. This was the bone of conteution and clash between the church management and Muslim people. Both parties now and then get into quarrel. It site were the church is located belonged to Muslim people living at puthanTharuvai

In order to put a period to this complex issue Fr. Ignatius arranged for a peace talk between the two parties before the presence of Rev. Fr. AmalaDass Victoria and Rev. Fr. Stephen Dass on 10.01.1951.But the Muslims did not bow to peace. Fr. Ignatius took him matter to his heart. He died the same night of a heart-attach. On hearing the death news of Fr. Ignatius, the Muslim people felt very sorry and donated the land to the church.

3. Rev. Fr. Cruetz Marian:

After Rev. Fr. Ignatius, Rev. Fr. Cruetz Marian took over the parish priest – hood of SokkanKudieruppu. He was the parish priest of the SokkanKudieruppu. Parish from 1954 to 1961. During his parish priest hood, he constructed preventive walls to prevent the infiltration of sand from entiring the church.¹³ It is really an uphill task.

4. Rev. Fr. Cruetz Antony:

He had the parish priest hood of the SokkanKudieruppu from 1964 to 1972. His period is celebrated to be the Golden age in the history of Manal Matha.¹⁴ It was he who did excellent works and services for the excellent works and services for the development of the church. In those days, the church had neither a kitchen room nor a lodge for the pilgrims and the devotees. During his period, the old and Palmyra the left thatched kitchen room gave way to a well built concrete kitchen room. So was the lodge too Fr. Gruetz Antony took steps to solve the drinking water problem with the donation by Mr. Maria Antony at Srilankan business man he arranged for an electric motor and constructed a tank. In the beginning, the floor of the church was not even in level and hard. He set the floor with marbles. On 6.6.1967 the church got electricity power connection with the steps. Undertaken by Fr. Cruetz Antony transport facilities from ThoppuVizhai to Manal Matha Church and from Puthan-Tharuvai to Manal Matha Church was made available.

In 1966 he had the home of the priest built for the staying purpose of the priest at Manal Matha Church premises. Thus the parish priest hood of Rev. Fr. Cruetz Antony because a decoration to the church.

Rev. Fr. Maria Dass:

He held the parish priest hood of the SokkanKudieruppu parish from 1972 to 1978¹⁵. It was he, who made the upper church well built with the passage of time; the number of tourists, pilgrims and devotees to the church went on increase. The lower church was not spacious enough to hold a big mass into the church. Therefore, he decided to build the upper church and rooted it with cement sheets despite strong oppositions and objection from a section of people.

Rev. Fr. Xavier:

He held the parish priest- hood of the SokkanKudieruppu parish upto 1986 being appointed parish priest in 1983-1986¹⁶. It was he who took sheer steps to revive spiritualism in the parish especially among the devotees of the Manal Matha Church.

During his period the SokkanKudieruppu parish experienced a spiritual revival. He conducted ArugodaiIyyakka Programmes at the Manal Matha Church as a result of what the devotees of Mother Mary benefited a lot.

He got a building beautifully built to the east of the church with the donation collected from the public. Now it serves a purpose of a Home for sisters. Moreover, with the monetary aid by the Tuticorin Diocese, he laid a road connecting the Manal Matha Church and Tharuvai.¹⁷

Conclusion

Manal Matha Church is one of the oldest places of worship in Tamil Nadu people from four corner pay. A devotional visit to this church. The number of the people visiting this is on the increase year by year. The genuine reason why this Manal Matha Church has earned, popularity significance and status at the India level lies behind the government's declaration of the Manal Matha Church a tourist spot. From the above it is clearly seen that the growth and development of the Manal Matha Church lies mainly behind the great works and excellent services of some important parish priests.

Foot Notes :

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4. SoosaiManikkam M.R., op.cit.,p-6.
5. Thinathanthi op.cit.,p-13.
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14. Most Rev. Amburose. M., Dioces of Tuticorin Directory, 1973, p-9.
15. Most Rev. Peter Fernando. S., op.cit., p-23.
16. Most Rev. Amala Nather. S.T., op.cit., p-24.