

*Ancient*  
**HINDU TEMPLES**  
*of SRI LANKA*

THURASINGAM KANDIAH



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BY THURAIKINGAM KANDIAH

# Foreword

The Malaysian Ceylon Saivites Association, which administers the Sri Kandaswamy Kovil, Kuala Lumpur, takes this opportunity to congratulate Sri K. Thuraisingam AMN on his noble venture to publish this book, captioned *Ancient Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka*.

The origins of ancient Hindu Sthalas are usually steeped in hoary antiquity. It is noted that almost all the ancient Hindu temples listed in his book are Hindu Saivite temples. Most of the temples are located within the Jaffna Peninsula – the homeland of our forefathers.

That Saivism has an ancient history, becoming probably the oldest living faith today, has been established by the archaeological findings in the Indus Valley.

During the era of Chola and Pandya rules Hinduism spread to Ceylon. Subsequently under the rule of the Jaffna Tamil Kingdom, Hindu religion and Tamil culture in Northern Province of Sri Lanka was nurtured, promoted and institutionalized by the Tamil Kings of Jaffna Kingdom.

The Hindu temples' history also indirectly reveals about the Hindu religious practices, tradition, culture and heritage which were always cherished by our forefathers.

This book also contains supplementary articles written about the internationally acclaimed religious luminaries who were on mission to propagate and educate on Saiva religious practices.

I do hope that this book would be of interest and beneficial to those who are desirous about knowing the historical aspects of the propagation and development of Hinduism and Tamil culture in Ceylon in general and of Jaffna in particular.

**'Saiva Siddantha Kalaanithi', 'Arul Neri Nesar', 'Sanga Pooshan',  
'Siva Thondar', Saravanamuthu Perampalam** AMN, AMP, PJK

*President*

Malaysian Ceylon Saivites Association

No. 3 Lorong Scott, Kuala Lumpur

1st December 2013

# Preface

A humble attempt has been made to embody the informative materials which I have collected from various sources including from books, Temple Maha Kumba Abishega Malars, periodicals, etc. These were supplemented by interviews conducted with temple priests, temple management and trustees, who provided valuable historical insights.

I was indeed fortunate to have had the right people at the right time and place to assist me in my venture to publish my second book *Ancient Hindu Temples of Sri Lanka*. The first book entitled *Tour of South Indian Temples* was published in the year 2009.

The successful completion of my second book was made possible owing to the advice and assistance rendered by a number of people. In this respect, my beloved wife and children have been very supportive and were totally involved to the extent of making a family trip to Jaffna in 2011. Again in 2013, my son Yogaraj accompanied me on my mission to gather more information about the ancient temples. He also helped me to take photographs. My daughter Kalarthevi undertook to handle the 'finishes' such as the design, layout and placing of photographs as appropriate. Besides, she also undertook to do the cover design.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not give the due recognition for the assistance rendered by the following persons and I thank them for their spontaneous response:

- Miss V. K. Devi, Miss T. Navamani and my niece Miss Hema Thasapalan for the initial work of typing the articles.
- Miss T. Nirmala for helping me with some reference materials, editing and proof reading.
- Mr. M. Pathmanathan for his technical advice and printing of the book.

As a concluding remark, I would like to state that the Tamil people of Jaffna have always ensured that the Tamil language is kept pure and uncorrupted and the Tamil culture kept vibrant. This fact has been duly acknowledged by the Tamil pundits and scholars of Tamil Nadu and the Sri Lankan diaspora. This book on the ancient Hindu temples of Sri Lanka aims to record the historical and spiritual background of Hindu culture in Sri Lanka. This record of information is well worth cherishing, well worth handing down to our children and our children's children for the sake of posterity.

Looking at the current political scenario in Sri Lanka and the Tamil diasporas, only time will tell whether the Tamil language, culture and identity would continue to be preserved.

**Thuraisingam Kandiah** AMN  
Chartered MCIPD (UK), MICD (UK)

8th January 2014

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# Introduction

## HINDUISM

The word 'Hindu' is a geographical name without any religious meaning. It is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Sindu' the name of the Indus Valley region of seven tributaries of Indus river. Persians invaded India in 6th century BC, who had no 'S' in their alphabet, changed the 'S' to 'H' and called Sindhu as Hindu. Sindhu might have assumed a sacred meaning as it became later the birth place of the four Vedas. The divine knowledge of these 4 Vedas are the basis of Hindu philosophy.

Hinduism is an old faith perhaps the oldest living faith. Professor Zaechner in his publication entitled 'Hinduism' published by Oxford University says "To the Hindus, religion is a way of life. It is not worship of a God in accordance with His revelation."

A unique feature of Hinduism is that all Hindus do not hold the same identical religious beliefs, nor do they all observe the same identical religious practices, with the results that individual patterns of worship is facilitated but at the same time, organized worship became difficult.

The term religion comes from the two Latin words 're' (back) and ligare (to bind or bring).

Hinduism was initially known as 'Sanadhana Dharma'. It is 'Sanadhana Dharma' which literally means 'Eternal Universal Truth' that ultimately blossomed into the present form of Hindu religion embodying within itself six division of worship namely Ganapathiya, Saiva, Vaishnava, Saktha, Kaumara and Sowra.

*"Hinduism... gave itself no name, because it set itself no sectarian limits; it claimed no universal adherence, asserted no sole infallible dogma, set up no single narrow path or gate of salvation; it was less a creed or cult than a continuously enlarging tradition of the god ward endeavor of the human spirit. An immense many-sided and*

*many staged provision for a spiritual self-building and self-finding, it had some right to speak itself by the only name it knew, the eternal religion, Sanatana Dharma..."*

Quotes: Sri Aurobindo

Today, Hinduism refers to all those who accept the teachings of the Vedas. It is a group of religions which accept the authority of Vedas. The most important members of the group are Saivism, Vaishnavism and Saktism.

Hinduism is the composite integration of the two sets of beliefs of belonging to two different races, the Dravidians and Aryans;

Both of them according to one school, immigrants at one time or another into the subcontinent – India, from the western regions. Saivism arose out of primitive Dravidian religion, based on only faith and worship. Vedic religion ending the philosophy of Vedanta is the precious gift of the Aryans.

## SAIVISM

Saivism, literally is the religion of those who worship Lord Siva and a Saivite is one who worships Lord Siva and follows the Saiva Agama. It is a very ancient faith.

"Saivism" says Dr Pope (Thiruvagasams) "is the old prehistoric religion of South India existing from pre Aryan times and holds sway over the hearts of the Tamil people."

Worship of Siva, Lord of the Universe is so very ancient, that its origin or beginning cannot be ascertained. (T. Canagarayar 1961 'Metaphysics of Saiva – Siddhanta').

Saivism was the religion of Lanka for a full period of 240 years in the pre-Buddhist Kingdom of Vijaya.

Dr. Paul E. Peiris, a Singhalese ethnologist and



antiquarian of international repute has pointed out to the five 'eeswarams' (Saivite Shrines) on the four cardinal points of the compass located on the shore-line of Ceylon pre-dating the birth of Buddha as evidence of the Tamil habitation of the island.

Hinduism was existent from pre-Vijayan times. Sir Williams Jones, a scholar of the 19th century AD after examining various monuments of Hindu antiquity, expressed the opinion "that this island (Lanka) was peopled time out of memory by the Hindu race." Rev. Phillipus Baldaus, a Dutch prelate who lived in Jaffna for seven years from 1658, observed that there were at his time 329 Hindu Temples in Jaffna.

### **KINGS CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS HINDUISM**

Hindu Temples gained prominence early in the thirteenth century due to King Magha. Kalinga Magha (Makon) was sent by his father principally to promote Saivism and to be interested particularly in the Eastern parts of the Island. He fulfilled these, by setting up the regime of the Vanniyars who were very religious. Several temples in the Northern and Eastern Vanni regions would indicate the deep interest the Vanni Chieftains had taken to promote Saivism.

The Singhai Ariyans of the Jaffna Kingdom, with alternating throne names of Segarajasekaran and Pararajasekaran, ruled as independent Ariyachakravarthi Kings of Jaffna, from about 1242 onwards. They of course, were deeply interested in promoting Hinduism and are to have erected Kailaya Natha Pillaiyar Temple, Pararajeskara Pillaiyar Temple, Inuvil Karunakara Pillaiyar Temple and many others. In fact one of the Kings is reported to have paid homage at every temple in his kingdom.

### **FOREIGN INVASION**

Most of the Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka were destroyed by foreign invaders in the 16th and 17th century. The architectural edifices erected by the ancient Royalties are now no more. The Portuguese invaders were in Ceylon from 1505 to 1658. Their purpose of spiritual and temporal conquest, which was consistent with the spirit of the age and ideas

pervading in the regions of their homeland, found that temples of other faiths were an obsession. Such structures presented to them a challenge to their mission and no sympathy or mercy was to be extended. These have to be wiped out.

So many incidents that have been recorded, several atrocities were committed often verging to primitive savagery.

At a seminar held in Colombo in 2005 at the Bandaranaike, Memorial International Conventional Hall the following were stated:

*'It was a scholarly odyssey into the past of Portuguese murder, brutality, destructiveness, religious bigotry and absolutist suppression for the annihilation of Buddhism and Hinduism in Sri Lanka. This massive massacre of 'unbelievers' pagans, heretics and infidels and the destruction of places of worship of Buddhists and Hindus, was carried out by the Portuguese conquerors of Ceylon between 1505 and 1658. Thousands of idols, images, pictures and religious items were smashed to powder and temples and devales plundered of their gold, ornaments, jewellery and clothes before they were destroyed.'*

The Dutch who were in Ceylon for about 150 years from 1658, were largely engaged in wiping out the religious work of the Portuguese and substituting their own instead. Hinduism was dormant; the more courageous with deeper conviction, observed their religious practice in secret.

The British took charge of Ceylon from 1815. They had their missionary zeal, but with a spirit of tolerance to other religions.

### **TEMPLE ARCHITECTURE**

Temple architecture is an ancient art. The Vastushastras have clearly defined the principles of temple building and to this day, these rules are closely followed. In spite of the various onward styles namely, the Dravida (South Indian), Nagara (North Indian) and Vesara (a combination of both), the basic structure is the same.

The following was cited in the 9th Edition of Encyclopedia Britanica:

*'The Tamil races were perhaps the greatest temple builders in the world'*

Till a few years ago, many people believed that with further progress of scientific knowledge, the Hindu temples would once and for all be proved as towering symbols of ancient superstition. But along with closing phase of the 20th century, an era of momentous scientific advance, there has been a resurgence of awareness about the efficacy of temple worship and we see many scientists joining the ranks of those who go to temples and worship the vigrahams – the icons symbolizing the Divine.

The concept of a shrine or a temple, a place or a building where several can assemble and congregate appears to have existed during the Vedic times and used wooden materials to build these temples. It was gradually replaced with materials of a more permanent nature such as the rock.

Temples of structural stone as different from earlier structures in rock architecture was the work of Pallavas in the 7th century.

The Chola period inherited and continued the Pallava tradition in temple construction. Many of the features that are seen today were introduced. The simple sikkaram of old outgrew with a multi tiered Vimanam, with a semi circular dome or present day sthupi with Kalasam crowning the top and walls were ornamented with sculptured plasters.

The Pandya regime devoted their attention to the architectural embellishment of the exterior of the temple. The erection of multi-tiered gopurams at entrances to the temples is their unique feature. The Nayakas made pillars, structural beams, etc more ornamental. These are architectural features of a Hindu Temple structure – contribution by the Pallava-Chola-Pandya Kings.

### **SAIVA ARCHITECTURE IN POLONNARUWA, SRI LANKA**

The Polonnaruwa contribution to Hindu art architecture is considerable. Polonnaruwa is an ancient city in Sri Lanka whose name is derived from Sage Pulasthiya as Pullasthiya Nagara. During the medieval age around the 10th, 11th and 12th

centuries, the Cholas extended their suzerainty over Sri Lanka.

Polonnaruwa was their capital city. Temple inscriptions reveal that Polonnaruwa was known as Pulainari or Jananathapuram. One inscription reads "Jana Natha Mangalam" – the auspicious city of the Lord of the people, a reference to Lord Siva. In another inscription, we read "Nakaril Chola Vallanattu Pulainariyana Jananathapuram" – Pullainari or Jananathapuram in the Chola land of peerless fertility.

The Cholas were replaced by indigenous dynasty with links to Pandyan Courts. Kings Vikramahabahu I and Gaja Bahu II followed Brahmanic practices.

A temple structure finished in detail keeping with traditional Dravidian temple architecture of the Vijaynagar school is the recently (1912) erected Ponnambalavaneswarar Temple, Kochchikade, Colombo.

### **THE NAVALAR ERA – RESUSCITATION OF HINDUISM**

In any situation, when there is a severe oppression, there emerges a new figure to provide succour and lead the helpless out of the mire. So it was with the Hindus in the 19th century and their messiah was Arumugam, later to be known as Arumuga Navalar, who was born in Nallur, Jaffna on the 18th of December 1822. He mastered the tenets of Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy and acquired eloquence in speech and writing in clear and simple prose. Soon he became the spearhead for a movement for the revival of Hinduism. It is said that several scholars, priests and teachers were among his audience, in the discourses and discussions he held. He carried out a campaign for the rebuilding of the several temples that has been devastated and destroyed earlier. He dedicated his life to the revival of Saivism, and the promotion of Tamil language .

The momentum generated by the forces set in motion by Arumuga Navalar, in the cause of a revival of interest on Hinduism and matters connected with Hinduism, developed into an active movement and continued even after his untimely demise in 1879, at an early age of fifty seven. A team of his followers

took up the mantle and worked towards achieving the goal envisioned by Arumuga Nalavar.

### HINDU TEMPLES OF SRI LANKA

According to a Government publication released some years back there are an estimated 2,300 Hindu temples in Sri Lanka and province-wise the Northern Province tops the list with 1000 temples followed by 650 temples in Eastern Province and 500 temples in the Uva Province and the other six provinces averaging between 20 to 30 temples. According to Thirumathi Vasantha Nadarajan BA, author of "Eelathu Thirukoilkaal" published in 2008, there are an estimated 800 Hindu temples which have been badly damaged due to the internal war in Sri Lanka.

An important mark and symbol of Hindu thought and life is the Hindu Temple. It represents the Hindu conception of his God as one endowed with innumerable qualities. It is said that Hindu temples have been functioning as centres of learning from time immemorial reminding man of his great destiny as being capable of evolving to higher levels of consciousness and greater freedom. The active divine energy installed in these temples functions as a noble influencing factor in his struggle for that inner development.

### PRESERVING AND MAINTAINING THE SAIVA TRADITION

The Sivachariyars have been playing a key role in preserving and maintaining the Saiva tradition. They are the custodians of the Saiva agamas. They give guidance to the Saiva Tamils in their religious discipline. They were holding dignified and honorable position in the Saiva community. They should be respected and adequately remunerated for their services. Until a generation ago they were having profound knowledge in agamas and other Saiva literatures. This is not the case now.

Future generations will analyse everything in the light of reason before accepting it. Puranic stories and rituals are not going to attract them unless rational explanations are given to them. Saiva Siddhanta philosophy gives plausible explanation to everything relating to Saiva religion. Compared

to other religious philosophies it is rational and scientific in its approach and outlook. Hence it will be accepted by the future generation, if explained properly. It should be remembered at all times that Hinduism is not PANTHEISTIC (believe in many Gods) as misunderstood, but PANEN-THEISTIC (seeing the same Lord in many).

### CONCLUSION

During the era of Jaffna Kingdom, the King became so powerful that they called themselves Chakravarthys (Emperors). The power-weilding Jaffna King crossed the seas with his numerous forces, besieged the Muslim king (Malik Gafoor) and then freed Madura and reinstated the Pandyan on his throne.

The greatness of the Pandyan Empire came to an end in 1312.

*"From now on the only Tamil Kingdom that lasted till the advent of European Colonialism was the Kingdom of Jaffna."* (Readings from Tamil History – compiled by Naddup Pattan T. A. Yogaratnam)

It is evident from historical records that the Tamil Kingdom beginning with the First Aryiachakravarthy played a pivotal role in propagation of Saivism and laid the foundation to ensure that the 'Tamil' language has been kept pure.

Thus Jaffna became the stronghold of the orthodox form of Saivite Hinduism. This was largely due to the predominance of the agricultural classes which had imbibed the orthodox traditions of Hinduism to a larger extent than any other social group, with the exception of the Brahmins.

However, foreign invasion, oppression and destruction of places of worship somewhat restricted the Hindu religious activities.

In the 19th century, Arumuga Navalur dedicated his life to the revival of Saivism and the promotion of 'Tamil' language.

As a matter of fact, the Jaffna Kingdom at Nallur had been at one time the centre for Tamil Sangam. A good collection of literature and scripts were made available at a library called Saraswathy Mahal in Nallur. These were symbols of cultural richness; a

national heritage revered with pride.

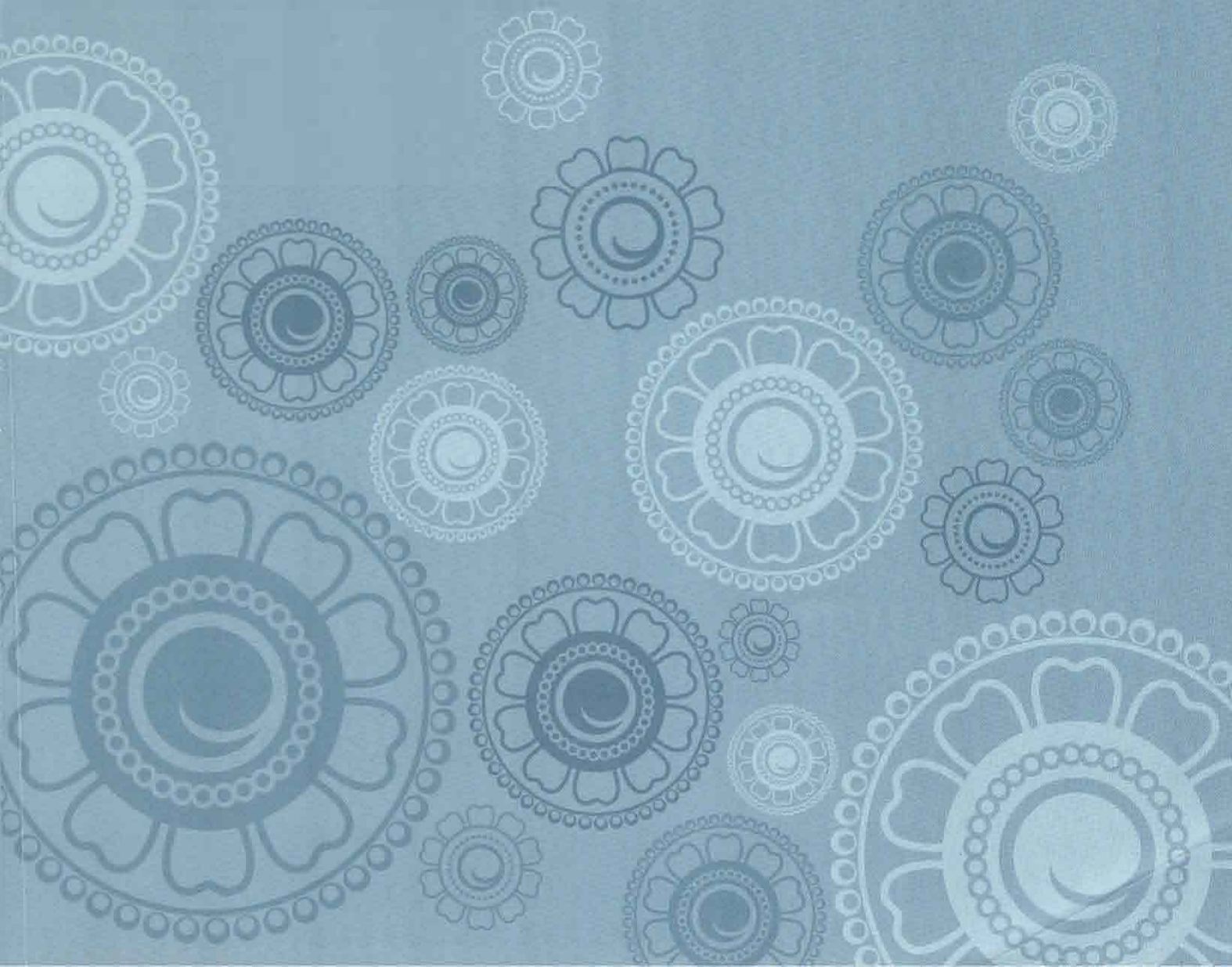
In referring to the civilisations of the Tamils, it can be said that whether they be called Nagas or Tamils, their stronghold was in the Tamil language which is kept in better condition than on other lands where corruption caused by the forcible pressure of foreign languages.

Historical records of pre-Jaffna Kingdom would reveal that the vast area north of Sri Lanka has been called Nagadipa or Nagathivu. It was so called because in the early days, it was inhabited by a group of Dravidians known as Nagas. They worshipped the serpent and the deity of Siva. The Nagas had

also lived in mainland Uttaradesam. The Naga Kings are said to have excelled in Tamil literature. Mudi Nagarayer of Murinciyur for example, was a poet of the second Tamil Sangam and they composed some of the finest Tamil verses.

The same cannot be said about Jaffna and its people under the current political climate. People have migrated to other countries and would be subject to the local cultural influence. The coming generation of Sri Lankan Tamils including the diasporas may not be aware of the historical achievements of the Eelamandalam.

# TEMPLES





# Kailayanatha Pillaiyar Temple, Nallur, Jaffna

*A temple built by Vijayakalinga Ariya King for his personal worship*



Side view of the Kailayanatha Pillaiyar Temple

## INTRODUCTION

Vijayakalinga Ariya, also known as Singhai Ariya, was the first Ariya Chakravarthy. Originally from South India, he eventually made Nallur the capital of his new Saivite Kingdom. He was the founder of the Greater Hindu Kingdom of Jaffna.

He set about building the Kailayanathar temple for his personal worship and to fulfill the religious needs of the royalty and the court. Besides the temple, he also built three halls for images, granaries, alms houses and other akkirarams, streets for cars, monasteries, halting places for travellers, and such like establishments, surrounding the area with lofty walls and towers. He also built other temples

around Nallur area.

The King lived in splendour and his Nallur Kingdom is said to have been another Kailayam on Earth, the first Kailayam being Mount Kailash in the Himalayas, the second being Chidambaram and the third is Dakshina Kailayam (Koneswaram).

The beautiful structure that Singhai Maha Raja built was destroyed some 400 years later on 2nd February 1620 when the Kingdom of Jaffna fell to the Portuguese. It is said that when the temple was about to be destroyed, the Chief Priest, fled to his village of Madduvil, taking with him the Moorthy Vighrams of 'Lingam' and 'Devi' which he dropped

into temple ponds there in two different places. Years later, the 'Lingam' was recovered from the pond and became the image of the Madduvil Sivan Temple.

A few years later, the Dutch – who were in Jaffna from 1658 to 1796 – were salvaging the stones from the once great Kailaya Natha Temple, for building their sea Fort Hummanheil off Kayts. At that time, the villagers discovered a statue of Vinayagar in the debris and placed it under a vilva (bael) tree for worship. Sri-La-Sri Arumuga Navalar, the great Saiva reformer and revivalist put up a small shed over the Vinayagar statue in 1850 making it a shrine. T. Kasipillai, a loyal resident and nephew of Arumuga Navalar improved the shed into a permanent masonry building and the structure became known as Kailaya Pillaiyar Kovil, with Vinayagar Moorthy as a presiding deity. The temple was managed under the trusteeship of the descendents of T. Kasipillai of the Navalar lineage with P. Ramalingam and thence to others.

Eventually, there was a general desire among Pillaiyar devotees, that the temple should also house Siva Lingam and Ambal. It was after all, the abode of Kailaya Nathar and Parvathi Ambal when the original edifice was erected by the first Ariya Chakravarthy King in the 13th century.

### THE PRESENT EDIFICE

With a lead given by the progeny of Madurai Appah (an elder from Nallur, known for his devotion, who took up residence at Madurai for devotional work), C. Suntheram who held an important Government position, spear-headed a movement for rebuilding the temple structure, upgrading the floor with and to include a Siva Sthalam in addition.

Mr C. Suntheram suddenly passed away in 1924 and his widowed sister Manicka Ammaiyyar took the burden on her devout shoulders and continued the good work undertaken by her brother. The temple reconstruction and expansion project was successfully completed and accordingly the Maha Kumba Abishegam was held in 1946.

With the installation of a Siva Lingam and Ambal and other prakara Moorthys, the Kailaya Pillaiyar

Temple was named **Kailayanatha Pillaiyar Kovil**.

### THE TEMPLE

The reconstructed temple has three Mandapams with triple entrances.

### Deities

Presiding deity: Lord Vinayagar

Other deities:

- Pancha Muga Vinayagar
- Subramaniyar
- Vairavar
- Sandeswarar
- Navagrahas

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sthala vriksha is the Vilva (Bael) tree.

### DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

#### Daily Pujas

Pujas are performed four times a day at 6.30am, 10.00am, 4.00pm and 5.00pm.

#### Major Festivals

A 10-day annual festival with theertham on the full moon day is held in April for Pillaiyar.

In June, the annual festival of Thirukalyanam of Kusalambihai Ambal to Lord Kailayanathar takes place.

### CONCLUSION

The temple now stands majestically to the South of Nallur owing to the lead role played by Mr C. Suntheram C.C.S, I.S.O, and the supportive role played by his widowed sister Manicka Ammaiyyar to ensure completion of the temple project. She participated in the follow-up Maha Kumba Abishegam in 1946 and passed away in 1962 with fulfillment. During her lifetime, the construction of a wooden Ther (chariot) was started and upon her demise the Ther was completed in 1963 by her brother S. Somasundram and his relatives.



## Karunakara Pillaiyar Temple, Urumpirai

*The only temple in Jaffna Peninsula where a stone inscription relating to the temple was found*



### INTRODUCTION

It is said that this ancient temple was established during the era of Vijayakalinga Ariya Chakravarthy. Originally it was started under a banyan tree as a Pillaiyar lingam. A devoted Brahmin called Karunakara Iyer took it upon himself to manage the temple and hence the temple was called Karunakara Pillaiyar Temple.

Historians assert that Karunakara Thondaiman who is said to have been a distinguished General under King Kulangtunga Cholan (1070–1118), has been closely associated with this temple. The General

had been sent from India for the development and procurement of salt in the Karanavai tracts in the Jaffna Peninsula. He is said to have been a devotee of Karunakara Pillayar Temple. He was living in Inuvil, a neighbouring village and the probability was that he constructed the temple with brick which was eventually destroyed by the Dutch.

The temple was managed under trusteeship. Karunakara Iyer family decedents have a lineage of priests (Iyers) in the following order – Karunakara Iyer, Sabapathy Iyer, Parama Iyer and



Left: Siva Sri Appucuddy Vaitheeswara Kurukkal. Right: Siva Sri Vaitheeswara Sabaratna Kurukkal.

Appucuddy Iyer.

During the era of Appucuddy Iyer there was a steady growth with Maha Mandapam, Nirtha Mandapam and Sthamba Mandapam taking shape. His son Vaitheeswara Kurukkal, a learned person of outstanding quality and merit brought the temple to a leading position with enhanced facilities and the traditions of the temple was maintained accordingly thereafter.

### LOCATION

The temple is located on the periphery of Inuvil East in a place called Parathaipulam, Urumpirai West. The area is in abundance with trees, lush vegetation and farm products.

### THE TEMPLE

The temple has a 5-tiered Rajagopuram and an adjoining Bell Tower which adds beauty and splendour to the front facade. With effect from 24th May 1959 the temple was managed by a Thiruppani Committee and the first man to head the Committee was Mr Ponnampalam.

Funds were forthcoming from devotees and well-wishers for the temple thiruppani. Major works were carried out to upgrade and to provide enhanced facilities.

It should be noted that under the able guidance of Brahma Sri Vaitheeswara Sabaratna Kurukkal, the temple was upgraded to provide all required facilities and it was well patronized by devotees from around Urumpirai, Inuvil Kondavil and other villages in proximity to the temple.

### Deities

Presiding deity:

- Karunakara Pillaiyar

Other deities:

- Sivakami Amman
- Nadaraja Peruman
- Arumugaswamy and His consorts (Valli and Theivaiyanai)
- Utsava Moorthys
- Nadesar Aalayam
- Vairavar Aalayam
- Valli Theivaiyanai Smetha Subramaniam

### Mandapams

- Mahamandapam
- Nirthamandapam
- Sthamba mandapam
  - built during the tenure of trusteeship of Appucuddy Iyer

The Flag Post (Kodisthambam) was erected in 1910. Vasantha Mandapam shed and Sthamba Shed were built during the tenure of trusteeship of Brahma Sri Vaitheeswara Kurukkal.

**Theertham:** Thirumanja Kinaru (well)

### Chariot (Ther)

Work on Chitra Ther commenced on 12th February 2005 and it was commissioned on 22nd September 2010 for a maiden car run which coincided with the Centenary celebration.

### DAILY PUJAS & MAJOR FESTIVALS

#### Daily Pujas

7.00am Kaalaisanthi

5.30pm Sayaratchai

#### Major Festival

The 10-day Mahotsava festival begins on Aavani Chathurthi.

## CONCLUSION

This temple is also associated, by local tradition with Vijayakalingan, the first of the Ariya Chakravarthy Kings of Jaffna, a reputed temple builder who went about paying homage at every temple in Jaffna Kingdom and founding more where needed. Enjoying the reputation of having been sponsored earlier by distinguished personages and backed with royal support, the temple would have had its glorious period during the days of Jaffna Kingdom rule prior to the arrival of foreign powers. The dark years of the 16th/17th century saw the demolition of several Hindu temples in Jaffna and this temple was no exception.

But the fact remains that years later, with the dawn of the Hindu renaissance in Jaffna during the Arumuga Navalar Era, one devoted Brahmin re-instituted Vinayagar worship at the site. The development and growth of the present Karunakara Pillaiyar temple structure is largely due to the devotion and tireless effort of the priests who for generations officiated as Kurukkals in this venerated temple.



Moolasthanam Moorthy Karunakara Pillaiyar

## Footnote

Brahma Sri Vaitheeswara Sabaratna Kurukkal is of the sixth generation down the lineage of trusteeship of Karunakara Pillaiyar Temple of Urumpirai. His son, Siva Sri Sabaratna Parameswara Kurukkal is currently the Chief Priest of Sri Kandaswamy Temple, Scott Road, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The Karunakara Pillaiyar Temple is being renovated. The Balasthanam was done on 15th March 2013 and Maha Kumba Abishegam is scheduled on 6th February 2014. The last Maha Kumba Abishegam was held on 7th February 1999. (See Photo Below)



Siva Sri Sabaratna Parameswara Kurukkal at the Stupi. On the left is his son Brahmasri Visaagan.

# Odaiyampathy Sri Katpakavinayagar Thevasthanam, Urumpirai

*An Ancient Temple established by the first Ariya Chakravathy*



## INTRODUCTION

It is said that in the 16th Century under the Portuguese rule, many of the Hindu temples were plundered and destroyed by the Portuguese and the Hindus were subjected to religious persecution. The devotees of Katpakavinayagar temple were no exception and they suffered the same fate in the hands of the ruling Portuguese.

However, undaunted, the devotees would on the quiet go to the only temple in the vicinity – Karunakara Pillayar Temple to worship. The Hindus

having suffered under the Portuguese, and later under the Dutch rule, enjoyed freedom of worship under the British rule.

At that prevalent time, there was a burning desire for the Hindus of the Urumpirai village to establish a local place of worship. Accordingly, in the year 1834 a brahmin named Ganapathy Iyer with the help and support of the local population established a Vinayagar Temple in a three acre land in Urumpirai. The land was donated by one Mr Illangai Nathan

Muthali of Urumpirai East. It is said that eventually the surrounding land areas were given to the temple by the generous land owners. The villagers also responded with generous contribution towards the construction, development and the growth of the temple and its associated facilities which were constructed in places over a period of time.

Today, the temple could boast of a lofty 5-tiered Rajagopuram complete with various facilities including mandapams, chariots and it holds annual Mahotsavam with the full complements of flag hoisting, festival, Ther (chariot) procession and theertham.

The Sri Katpakavinayagar Thevasthanam held its most recent Maha Kumba Abishegam on 9th February 2011 on a grand scale.

### ORIGIN OF THE WORD URUMPIRAI

In the early days travellers, in the absence of public transport were moving from place to place on foot, often carrying their loads on their head. To facilitate the travel, the Government planted shady trees lining both sides of the road. They also provided rest areas at regular intervals. These facilities enabled the travellers to stop and rest and proceed onwards with their journeys to their respective destinations.

The trees that lined the road sides were 'pirai'. This pirai tree is also called 'Perumchooli maram'. It was normal to number the trees lining the road side. At Urumpirai, is located the 25th tree 'uru' denotes the number 25. So it was the 25th pirai tree that served as location for the village which was thereafter called Urumpirai.

### LOCATION

The temple is situated in a place called 'Odaiyampathy' and it is said that Lord Vinayagar has been fulfilling the boons and wishes of His devotees hence the temple is called Odaiyampathy Sri Katpakavinayagar Thevasthanam.

It is located at the 5th mile of the Jaffna/Palaly Road and Urumpirai is bordered to the North by Kondavil, to the the South by Urelu to the West by Inuvil and to the East by Kopay.

The temple is accessible through the

following routes from the Urumpirai junction:

- Following the road towards north will lead you to Palaly Military Airport.
- Going on the opposite direction (south) would lead you to Jaffna Town.
- Public transport bus plying Jaffna/Palaly will take you to the temple.
- Going east of Urumpirai Junction, one would be going in the direction to Kopay Kaithadi Road, passing Road A9 and towards Chavakachcheri.
- Going west would lead you to Manipay and bus services the area of Kopay and Manipay.

### THE TEMPLE

Since 1952, the temple was managed by a five-man committee which administered the temple affairs in accordance with panchayat principles. Today, the Temple Management comprises of a nineteen-member committee with a President at the helm, a three-member internal audit committee and a book keeper.

The foundation for the Rajagopuram of the temple was laid on 1st August 1982. However, work was delayed owing to the country's internal strife. The 5-tiered Rajagopuram having been completed, the Kumba Abishegam for the delayed project was held on 4th July 1991. Some of the sculptural works were re-done and duly painted.

Originally, there was a bell tower on a smaller scale. Later, the bell tower was upgraded and was commissioned with a Kumba Abishegam which was held on 10th July 1991. The bell weighing 1,000kg was donated by a generous devotee.

The temple building has various facilities to accommodate the needs of the rituals and the needs of the devotees which are as follows:

### Mandapams

- Arthamandapam
- Kumba Mandapam
- Tharisana Mandapam
- Outer Mandapam (veli)
- Vasantha Mandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Sthamba Mandapam



Lord in procession

- Gopura Mandapam
- Inner Mandapam

### Deities/Aalayams

Presiding deity:

- Vinayagar

Other deities:

- Santhaanagopalar
- Nadesar
- Mahaletchumy Aalayam
- Inner Vairavar
- Thatchinamoorthy
- Kaliamma
- Subramaniar Aalayam
- Navagrahas
- New Santhaanagopalar
- Theradi Vairavar
- Sandeswarar

### Chariots (Ther/Sapparam/Vahanam)

- Pillaiyar Ther
- Manjam
- Sapparam
- Murugan Ther
- Kailaya Vahanam
- a total of eleven vahanams of all sorts donated by generous donors

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held three times daily.

### Major festivals

Since the 1920s the annual mahotsava festival with flag hoisting ceremony has been carried out. It was a 10-day festival until the mid 1960s, and then it became a 15-day festival. Other festivals that are carried out include Latchaarchanai, Pillaiyar Story and Thiruvembavai.

## CONCLUSION

The village of Urumpirai is well-known for its numerous educational institutions which have provided educational foundation for the locals who had eventually become successful professionals such as medical doctors, engineers, educationist, accountants and other professionals.

The village was at one time abundant with Government pensioners from Singapore and Malaysia. It is evident that villagers both local and overseas have responded generously with donations for the upgrading and renovation of the numerous temples in the village of Urumpirai. Generally, the Sri Katpakavinayagar Thevasthanam is well patronised by devotees during the annual festivals owing to the strategic location with easy accessibility and with good transport facilities.

# Sri Pararajasekara Pillaiyar Temple, Inuvaiyampathy Inuvil

*A temple worshiped by the Ariya Chakravarthy Kings*



## INTRODUCTION

Inuvil means bamboo and it is said that this place was full of bamboo growth until human settlement took place and with human intervention the whole area was transformed into an arable land full of fruit trees and farm cultivation.

The story begins with the arrival of the first Ariya Chakravarthy from South India. He made Nallur the capital of his new Saivite Kingdom of Jaffna. He was King Vijayakalinga who was hailed as the founder of the greater Hindu Kingdom of Jaffna. A total of 19 kings ruled Jaffna from 1242–1620 under Ariya

Chakravarthy dynasty.

In 1748, the elder son of King Kanagasooriyan ascended the throne with the royal title 'Singhai' Pararajasekaran – a valiant military figure. His other brother 'Singhai' Segarajasekaran not only excelled in military skills but also in arts. They both jointly transformed the capital city of Nallur into a city of dazzling grandeur and accordingly established credibility amongst the local population of Nallur and the surrounding villages including the village of Inuvil. They promoted the growth of Tamil Sangam,

Hindu religion and established places of worship. They were responsible for rebuilding temples destroyed during Sempaha Perumal's invasion.

The Sri Pararajasekara Pillaiyar Temple of Inuvil is said to be about 600 years old. It was worshipped by the Ariya Chakravarthy kings and is believed to be built by one of the kings. Originally the temple with a simple structure was started by a Brahmin of the Anthanar family. He devoted his life serving the temple performing pujas and rituals regularly and according to aagamic principles.

In 1560, the Portuguese invaded the northern part of Sri Lanka and all the Hindu temples were targeted for destruction. The Inuvil devotees fearing that the Pillaiyar temple is likely to suffer the same fate, took measures to place shrines in obscurity and turned this temple into 'Madam' (rest place). Thereafter it was called Madathuvaasal Pillaiyar Temple, Inuvil.

The British having defeated the Dutch in 1718, the fear of oppression under a foreign threat was over. Hindus were allowed to freedom of worship under the British rule. The Inuvil Madathuvaasal Pillaiyar Temple reverted to its original name of Sri Pararajasekara Pillaiyar Temple.

## LOCATION

Inuvil is situated in the Jaffna-Kankesanthurai Road and is about 4 miles from Jaffna. It serves as a central place for the network of roads serving the villagers around Valikamam. To the east of the Pillaiyar temple is Amman Temple and Kaaraikaal Sivan Temple and to the west, the Kandaswamy Temple.

## THE TEMPLE

The temple Rajagopuram was built and completed in 1972 and the Kumba Abishegam for the Rajagopuram was held on 4th September 1972. The 5-tiered Rajagopuram is 65 feet in height and is the pride of the local people.

Besides the Rajagopuram, the temple has three other gopurams built in the cardinal directions as follows:

- In the south adorning the entrance of Panchamuga Vinayagar is a 5-tiered gopuram of Chola style architecture with a height of 37

feet.

- In the north, a 5-tiered Chola style gopuram rising to a height of 49 feet.
- In the westerly direction, a 5-tiered gopuram of Pallavi style is built. It is 35 feet in height.

## Deities

Presiding deity:

- Lord Vinayagar

Other deities:

- Lord Subramaniam and His Consorts
- Pancha Muga Vinayagar
- Vairavar
- Naalvar
- Thatchinamoorthy
- Navagrahams (nine planets)
- Durgai Ambal
- Santhaangopalar
- Pooranananthanaar
- Sandeeswarar, etc.

The temple has Kailaya vahanam and chariots namely Chithrai Ther, Thirumanjam, Sapparam and Kaddu Ther.

## Mandapams

There are mandapams namely:

- Arthamandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam
- Kalayana Mandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Theertha Mandapam
- Nirtha Mandapam

## Bell Tower

The bell tower of the temple was completed in 1962 and the Kumba Abishegam was held on 9th September 1962. The bell tower approximately weighing 1700 lbs was from White Chapel Bell Foundry of Britain.

## The Sacred tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree of this holy sthala is Nelly Tree (Phyllanthus emblica linn)





An illustration of the Sri Parajasekara Pillaiyar temple in 1939.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held six times daily.

### Major Festivals

Mahotsavam is the major festival which commences with flag hoisting ceremony and concludes with Ther (chariot festival) and Theertham. The annual Mahotsava Festival is held during the month of Vaikasi and ends with Theertham on the 11th day of the festival.

Vinayagar Sathurthi is held in the month Aavani (August/September). The monthly Sathurthi and Sangodahara Sathurthi is carried out with special pujas and participated by a large number of devotees. In the latter festival, the Deity is taken around in procession. The Vinayagar Sashti (Pillayar Perumkathai) occurs in the month of Karthigai (November/December) for 21 days.

The other festivals include Marghazhi, Thiruvembavai, Sivarathiri, Hindu New Year and Navarathiri.

## CONCLUSION

The Sri Parajasekara Pillaiyar Temple of Inuvil is rich in history and records indicate that during the era of the Ariya Chakravathy rule there was an increase in the number of Pillaiyar temples. Currently Jaffna has a total of 89 Pillaiyar temples.

The Sri Parajasekara Pillaiyar Temple held its most recent Maha Kumba Abishegam on 1st February 2009. The Maha Kumba Abishegam for the temple previous to this was held in 1939, 1961, 1984 and 1997.

Steeped in history, the period prior to 1939 was full of 'turbulence' and the year 1939 saw the full recovery. The temple after the most recent Kumba Abishegam appears to be more colourful. The temple rituals are being carried out in accordance with the aagamic principles and it continues to maintain the divinity and sanctity in the temple.

# Kasi Vinayagar Kovil (Kasipillaiyar), Veenaakadavai, Tellippalai

*A centre for religious education*



## INTRODUCTION

The Kasi Vinayagar Kovil was established in 1920. It is said that a devotee on his return after a theertha pilgrimage to Kasi, brought along with him a vigraham and placed it in this place for his worship. Through passage of time this temple was gradually upgraded providing the necessary facilities for worship.

In 1973, a Kodisthambam (Flag Pole) was erected and thereafter the major festivals commences with a flag raising ceremony.

It is said that the priests cum trustees of this temple are of three generations, serving this temple for a total period of almost 100 years. During the same period, records indicate that they served the Konaseema Vairavar Temple, Mahathanai as poosagars. The Vairavar temple of Mahathanai is about two kilometers from Kasi Vinayagar temple. The first priest named Siva Sri Muthukumara Swamigal served the Kasi Vinayagar temple up to the year 1940. His son Siva Sri Sivakadachcha

Kurukkal took over from his father and continued to serve both the temples. Upon his demise in 1970, his son named Siva Sri Kanasalingam served the temples until his demise in 2007.

## TEMPLE

### Deities

Presiding deity:

- Vinayagar

Other deities:

- Lingam (old)
- Eluntharuli Vinayagar
- Nagathambiran

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held regularly.

### Major Festivals

The Annual Mahotsava festival is Chithrai Sathayam – a 10-day festival commencing with flag-raising and concluding with theertha festival.

The monthly Sathurthi is also celebrated.

The Kasi Vinayagar temple has links with the Konaseema Vairavar temple, Mahathanai. On the Vijayathasami day of Navarathiri, the Vairavar temple is graced by Lord Kasi Vinayagar during His tour of Oorvalam.



## CONCLUSION

During the tenure of service of Siva Sri Sivakadachcha Kurukkal, the temple formed the 'Paalar Gnanothaya Sabai' under the leadership of this priest. Classes such as pannisai classes, music, and religious classes were a regular activity with examinations and annual prize giving being held.

There was good response from the students especially from the Mahajana College, Tellippalai. This activity is still being continued.

# Arulmigu Sri Veyilukantha Pillaiyar Thevasthanam, Nallur

*The first of the four temples built by the Tamil Kingdom*



## INTRODUCTION

Historical records indicate that King Vijayakalinga of the Ariya Chakravarthy dynasty had a minister named Buvanekavahu. This minister had been ordered to establish a new capital in a suitable area in Jaffna Peninsula and he had constructed a flourishing Jaffna city accordingly and also built a temple for God Kandaswamy in Nallur.

King Vijayakalinga Ariyan was described as a brave, devoted Saivite who had built many temples in the Jaffna city and in his territory. Accordingly he built temples in all the four directions of the

city of Nallur. The first of the four temples he built was Veyilukantha Pillaiyar temple (east). The other temples are Sattanathar or Nallainathar temple (north), Veeramakali Amman temple (west) and Kailayanathar temple (south).

Along with Kailayanathar temple, he built separate huge temples for God Kailayanathar and Goddess Umayyaval where there were three cultural organizations (Sabhas), building for subordinate deities, storage place, sacrificial halls, courtyards, roads for chariot run, religious institutions (similar

to monasteries) and alms houses.

The foremost of these temples, in the early days was the first of the four temples built by the King in the easterly direction of the Nallur city – Veyilukantha Pillaiyar.

### LOCATION

The temple is located along Chemmanni Road i.e to the east of Nallur, next to 'Muthirai Santhai' in a place called Nayanmar Kaddu. It is a place where the idols of the 63 Nayanmars are housed for worship.

### TEMPLE

It is believed that the temple is called 'Veyilukantha Pillaiyar' because there was a day when heavy dark clouds shrouded the sky above the temple, and it was followed by rain. At the same time, sun rays penetrated the clouds and the beam of rays brightened up the temple and its shrine. The worshippers believe that Suriya Bhagawan's blessing is always there at this holy shrine.

### Deities

Presiding deity:

- Pillaiyar

Other deities:

- Murugan
- Vairavar
- Santhaanagopalar
- Nagambiran
- Panchamuga Vinayagar

The original deity of Pillaiyar is now located on the right hand side of the temple courtyard.

### Chariot (Ther)

The temple ther is called Kaddu Ther.

The temple is managed by trustees who are of the paramparai lineage. The current trustee is Siva Sri Jatheeswara Kurukkal who succeeded the late Sivagnana Sunthara Iyer. Others involved in

the management of the temple include Siva Sri S. Balasunthara Kurukkal, Sri Sothinathan and Siva Sri P. Vinayagarmoorthy Iyer.

### DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

#### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held three times daily.

#### Major Festivals

The Annual Mahotsava festival is Pangguni Uthiram and theertham held in March/April every year.

### CONCLUSION

The following factors have prompted the researchers to make a study of the cultural practice of the people prevalent during the rule of the Tamil Kings:

1. Veyilukantha Pillaiyar temple which is sited on the periphery of the Tamil Kingdom is located within the area of Nayanmar Kaddu.
2. The Guru Puja Madam for the 63 Nayanmars known as Madathu Vaayil or Madathu Valavu is located within this area.
3. The antiquity of the ancient library called 'Saraswathy Mahal'.
4. The ancient cultural practice of the villagers of 'Kotte Vaayil'.
5. Ancient Native Medicine and practice and its ancient literature.

The Veyilukantha Pillaiyar Temple is seen at the same location today. It is believed that King Pararajasekaran who ascended the throne later had rebuilt some of these temples that had been demolished by invaders.

Historians assert that both in South India and in Sri Lanka, Vinayagar worship was prevalent since the Sangam Age. In Jaffna Peninsula Vinayagar worship was practiced for several hundred years.

# Sivan Kovil, Karainagar

*Also known as Eelathu Chidambaram*

## INTRODUCTION

A Sivan temple situated in Karainagar, north-west of Jaffna Peninsula has gained prominence as Eelathu Chidambaram. Thus it has set a fine example for the other temples in Karainagar. It has been built at the site of an ancient Aiyandar Temple at Thinnapuram in Valanthalai, Karainagar.

It is known as Eelathu Chidambaram because it celebrates Marghazhi Thiruvathirai Festival which is held for Lord Thillai Nadarajan of Chidambaram, South India.

Records indicate that during the era of Tamil Kings and the Vanni Regime, one Muthu Manickam Chettiar erected a temple for worship of Aiyandar at Viya, a neighbouring village and held its consecration ceremony (Kumba Abishegam) on 25th May 1518.

The temple was well-built and richly endowed so much so it attracted the attention of foreign invaders. The Portuguese who went to loot and plunder were thwarted by Divine grace but the Hollanders razed it to the ground subsequently in 1658.

About 200 years later with the resuscitation of Hinduism during the Navalar era, one devotee named Andi Murugar received the Divine urge for re-building the temple for Aiyandar. He went into meditation and on receiving Divine guidance; he recovered the old Aiyandar Vighram which had been hidden in a low marsh when the temple was demolished. He, with the help of his disciple Amballavi Murugar, raised funds and a humble temple for Aiyandar was erected at Thinapuram, where the Vighram was recovered.

In due course, as years went by, Amballavi Murugar, the then sole surviving founder, with his enthusiasm and religious goal, made the Aiyandar



Temple a landmark for worship by the devotees of that place.

He observed the festivals and practices carried out at Thillai (Chidambaram). He then embarked on constructing a Sivan temple in the premises. With great success he secured Moolasthanam Moorthy, sculptured at Chidambaram itself. Thus the Sivan temple at Karainagar or Eellathu Chidambaram (Siva) that we see today was inaugurated in the year 1848. Here reigns Sounderambihai Ambal Semetha Sundaresa Moorthy for worship by the thousands of devotees who gather at this sthalam.

## LOCATION

Karainagar is about ten miles from Jaffna town and is entirely surrounded by sea. To the north is Palk Strait, to the east is Ponnalaikadal which is the small expanse of water which swell and recedes seasonally and to the south is a narrow strip of shallow sea. The island is about four miles from tip to tip and about three and a half miles wide and was said to be quite busy with economic activities and well populated. However, it is not so under the current situation.

In the early days, the Karai plant – a type of thorny plant (*Canthium Parviflorum* Linn) – was growing in abundance, hence the island was called Karaitivu. It was re-named Karainagar on 12th August 1923 with the consent of the Government. In Sri Lanka, three places have been named Karaitivu. Therefore Karainagar was so named to distinguish from the other two places.

## TEMPLE

With the passage of time, the temple has had several improvements and additions carried out to accommodate the requirements including a proper Gopura Vaasal (entrance).

Consecration ceremonies (Kumba Abishegam) were held in the years 1848, 1903, 1934, 1950, 1970, 2000 and the most recent one was held in 2004.

Besides the prakara moorthys of a Sivan Temple, special place is given to the Aiyandar (of old) in a shrine parallel to the sanctum. In the outer south prakara the celebrated Banyan tree under which Thiru Murugar meditated stands. It is said that the Banyan tree was planted by an Ariya Brahmin called Thinakaran who is also known as 'Thinakavi' and the place he settled down was called 'Thinakaranpiddu'.

A Manickamadam provides accommodation for pilgrims. To the north of the temple is located Siva Ashrama where recital of thevarams, puranam reading and bhajan singing are held regularly.

## The Deities

Presiding deity:

- Sundaeswarer/Soundarambihai Ambal

Other deities:

- Vinayagar

- Nadarajah Moorthy
- Subramaniyar
- Somaskantha Moorthy
- Sandeswarar
- Manickavasagar
- Navagrahas
- Nandhi - Palipeedam

## Theerthams

- Sithaamirthavaavi
- Thoorvaasasaaharam
- Paramaanantha Koobam

## Sacred Trees (Sthala Vriksha)

- Arasu (Banyan – *Ficus Glamerata* Linn)
- Vanni (the Suma tree – *Prosopisspicigara*)
- Eluppai (Bassia – *Bassia Long ifolia*)

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held four times daily.

### Major Festivals

The annual festival at the temple is held for ten days during the period of March/April. The most notable event is the festival in December culminating with the Ratham (Chariot) event and the celebrated Aruthira Abishegam and Tharisanam on Thiruvathirai day, when devotees from all over Jaffna Peninsula gather at Thinnapuram for Tharisanam of Divine Dance as at Thillai Chidambaram.

The other annual festivals celebrated are as follows:

- Thaipoozam
- Masi Magam
- Aadi Puram
- Aavani Sathurthi
- Navarathri
- Karthigai Festivals

Annually, Manivaasagar Vilzha is celebrated during the month of Marghazhi (December/January).

## BOOKS WRITTEN ON THE TEMPLE

- Eelathu Chidambara Puranam
- Thinnapura Anthathy
- Thinnapura Venba
- Thinnapura Thiru Pathigam
- Eelathu Chidambaram
- Thinnapura Thiruchathagam
- Thinnapura Oonjal
- Thinnapura Sundaeswarar Varalaaru

## CONCLUSION

In the epics of Manimekalai, it mentions of a place called 'Manipallavam' which was said to be located at a distance south of 'Kaviri Poompatinum' and that Manipallavam has subsequently become part of Jaffna and was called Karaitivu. Currently, it is known as Karainagar.

Researchers say that this island was already a well-formed historic place some 2,350 years ago. A renowned Tamil scholar named Agathiar lived here. A sage named Thoorvasa Munivar had been in meditation in this island at a place called Thoovagiri. This blessed island once had a population of people with high literacy. Most of them are professionals and are to be found working in various parts of the world including Malaysia.

The people in Malaysia, who originated from Karainagar, not forgetting their roots and kindreds have formed an association called 'Karai Union' which keeps them in bind. Together they respond spontaneously to any call where there is a need to alleviate the sufferings of their fellow residents of Karainagar.

## SHORT NOTES

### JYORTHILINGA THEERTHAMS

A Lingam is an image of Lord Shiva. The Lingam though literally means a phallus, in the context of Siva it represents all that Siva the Sivapuranam claims that whichever place Siva devotees congregate, there Siva manifests himself in the form of Lingam.

Among all the Lingams, there are twelve Jyorthilingams i.e especially consecrated symbols of Siva which are located in various parts of India as follows:

- |                |                  |                    |               |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| • Somanath     | [Gujarat]        | • Rameswaram       | [Tamil Nadu]  |
| • Mallikarjuna | [Andhra Pradesh] | • Naageshvara      | [Maharashtra] |
| • Maha Kala    | [Madhya Pradesh] | • Trayambakeshvara | [Maharashtra] |
| • Omkareshvara | [Madhya Pradesh] | • Kedarnath        | [Uttaranchal] |
| • Vaidyanatha  | [Maharashtra]    | • Gusneshvara      | [Maharashtra] |
| • Bhimshankara | [Gujarat]        | • Vishvanatha      | [Kasi]        |

Nandikeshwara theertham also has a most consecrated Lingam though it is not one of the twelve Jyothir Lingams. Literally, a theertham is a holy spot on the bank of a river but generally considered a holy spot. Kasi is one of the holiest town on the banks of the River Ganges. Three entities associated with the Pilgrim spot (Kshetra) makes them holy viz a deity (Moorthy), a holy water body and a holy tree (Vitiksha) associated with it.

In various Puraanas, the Kshetras connected with various deities have been enlisted and eulogized.



# Koneswaram Sivan Temple, Trincomalee

*The Dakshina Kailayam or Kailash of the South*



A giant statue of Lord Siva at the Koneswaram Sivan Temple

## INTRODUCTION

Koneswaram Temple is sited on a hill along the North Eastern seashore of Sri Lanka. This hill is otherwise known as Swamimalai and is just above Fort Frederick. Apparently, this rebuilt temple is dedicated to Lord Siva. The temple is built on top of the cliff standing right on the edge of the Bay of Koddliyar and provides a majestic view of the Trinco town.

The biggest river in Sri Lanka, the Mahavaliganga flows by this area into the sea. Trincomalee is a natural sea port on the eastern side of

Sri Lanka. Koneswaram is an ancient Hindu Sthalam of antiquity. It is believed that the name Koneswaram is derived from the Sanskrit expression 'Gokarneswara' which was the applied name for the form of Siva. The ancient name for the location of this temple was Trikoodam, later called Thirukonamalai (Trincomalee).

## LEGENDARY VERSION AND ANCIENT HISTORY

The story of ancient Lanka-puram abounds with

legends, myths and traditions like that of any other land. Accordingly tradition persists strong by associating ancient Koneswaram with Emperor Ravana and his worship of the sacred Siva Lingam: for, at Koneswaram (Kon-Iswarem, Kon-King or Supreme one) a temple was built for Iswaram or God Parameswara. During the reign of Emperor Ravana this temple was known as 'Dakshina Kailayam'.

This ancient temple originally sited at the foot of the rock was submerged under the sea because of a sea catastrophe which occurred in the year 306BC (History of Sri Lanka).

In 1961, a researcher named Mike Wilson reported that one section of the Moolasthanam of the submerged ancient temple is visible and the remaining part of the temple is underwater. It is said that the temple was rebuilt on the peak of Swami Rock (Swamimalai) in the 7th century. The pilgrims came to worship at this well-famed sthalam not only from Lanka but also from India.

The name and fame of Koneswara Nathar inspired Thirugnanasambanthar, one of the samayachariar Hindu Saints who lived in the 7th century, to offer garland of thevaram outpouring in a pathikam of verses, thus elevating the place to a 'Paadal Petra Sthalam', earning the name of Dakshina Kailayam or Kailash of the South.

During the 15th century, Saint Arunagirinathar who visited this temple wrote Thiruppugazh hymns about this venerated temple. According to Arunagirinathar, the town housing this temple is one of the most beautiful places he has ever been, and this temple was magnificently managed by the Brahmin priests.

## HISTORY

More light is thrown on the history of Koneswaram by Dr C. Sivaratnam, the author of *Culture History and Principles of Hinduism* published in 1964. He has in 1978 published a compendium based on the above volume which reads as follows:

*"It was during Pandu's reign 488AD that Kulakodan, a prince of Kaveri-pum-pattinam came to Lanka, to the shrine of Koneswaram, himself personally interested in it as his father*

*Mana-Niti-Kanda Cholan probably a chieftain of Chola-land, had previously come on a pilgrimage to this shrine and on his return, his queen conceived Kulakodan (Kulang-tank, Koddan-temple) builder of a tank and temple. He found Koneswaram in ruins and repaired it. Further, he resolved to establish an endowment for the maintenance of the temple by converting seven tracts of land at Tambalakamam into fruitful groves and fertile fields. For this he lacked water and cultivators. He converted 64 small tanks into one large tank at Kantalai. As for the cultivators he got down 51 tribes of Vanniyars, a caste of agricultural experts from the Pandyan coast."*

It would be seen from the above that the prince dedicated himself to his mission, viz; the restoration of the temple at Koneswaram and building a tank for watering the temple paddy lands, thus becoming immortalized with the name – Kulakodan, the builder of tank and temple. The Pallava culture and civilization made the area flourish, and the temple also became an outstanding place of worship.

It is also said in history that in the year 831AD, a place called 'Pallaiyara' became the capital town of the Chola country. During that period, King Kumaraangkusan ruled the country. He had a daughter named Seerpathathevi. In the history of Naguleswaram, Chola Princess Maruthapiravikavalli married the King of Jaffna named Ukkirasinghan and their son married Seerpathathevi. The married couple, with their retinue, came sailing to Lanka for a tour. The ship sailed along the shores of Koneswaram. The princess wanted to worship the Lord when she was told by the crewman that the ship appears to be firmly anchored without any reason. The crew then dived in to investigate the cause.

Meanwhile, the princess prayed to Lord Vinayagar the remover of obstacles. The crewmen did not find any cause for the ship to be firmly anchored. However in the course of the examination underneath the ship, they found a Vinayagar icon deep underneath the ship and brought it up to the surface. The ship immediately was freed from grip

and was able to move, which was indeed a miracle.

The Cholas and the Pandyas paid homage to Lord Koneswaram. Sunderapandyan (1251–1280) who built several temples, had an architectural edifice “with thousand pillars” erected at Koneswaram, a description of which is gleaned from a Portuguese document.

For about 400 years from 1270 till 1624, the Ariya Chakravarthy Kings of Jaffna became the custodians of the Koneswarar temple. Among them Jeyaveera Singhai Ariyan and Pararajasekaran V were munificent benefactors and custodians of Saivite Culture. The Chieftains of Vanni too made several large endowments to this temple.

Segarasasekaran, the King of Jaffna (1380–1410) is credited with the authorship of Dakshina Kailaya Puranam, the Thalapuram or temple history of this shrine.

### THE PORTUGUESE RULE (1505–1658)

In the year 1624 during the Hindu New Year festival of Koneswaram, the Deities Mahthumai Ambal Semetha Thirukoneswarar were out in procession around the town with the entire devotees following the procession. While the procession was out, Portuguese disguised as Brahmins entered the temple and began looting all the valuables of the temple.

The few who were in the temple resisted the looters but all of them were brutally killed and the loot carted away by the Portuguese. The temple management sensing further threat immediately removed the deities and hid them in a safe place.

The Portuguese came back with canons and razed the temple building to the ground. However, the thousand pillars Mandapam, the holy tank and Arthamandapam escaped destruction.

Nothing of the old temple, however, remains today except for a single pillar stone as the temple and all its structure were blasted into the sea by the Portuguese, under the direction of Constantine de Souza. The site remained an empty rock for several years and devotees worshipped and made their offerings facing the sea.

### THE EMERGENCE OF THE NEW TEMPLE

In the annals of history of Koneswaram the unearthing of icons was considered gifts and it gave hope to the Hindu devotees. In 1944, in the course of excavation and widening works carried out inside for water storage had led to the finding of the icons of Vishnu and Mahaletchumy.

On 27th July 1950, in the heart of Trincomalee town, the workers unearthed the icons of Somaskanthar, Ambal and Sandirasekarar which were of excellent bronze of the celebrated Koneswaram Temple. Several Moorthys of superb workmanship must have adorned such a temple, judging from the icons discovered by the workmen in the forties and fifties. Thus, the findings caused a wave of resurgence.

With renewed interest, steps were taken to construct a Sivan Temple at the old site on the top of Swamy Rock. Under the initiative of Kalanithi Balendra, construction commenced on 3rd July 1950. It is a grand structure and the ancient Thiru-Moorthy Vighrams which were unearthed have been installed prominently in this temple in 1952. The Maha Kumba Abishegam was held on 3rd April 1963.

### Deities

The presiding deity is Thirukonechcharer and His Consort is Mathumai Ambal. The Thirukona Nayakar Somaskanthamoorthy, is an excellent Chola bronze icon over a foot and a half and by a foot in size and approximately weighs about 50lbs.

The Mathumai Ambal Devi is exquisite and is cast to match the Somaskantha Vighram.

The Vinayagar icon which was also an unearthed icon is unusually large.

The Sandirasekara Moorthy is believed to be an icon of an earlier period, and Parvathy Ambal in Thiruvanka pose, were the other bronzes recovered.

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree of this temple is Kalaalamaram (Rock Banyan tree). It is located at the northern point of

the rock adjoining the present temple. The tree is flourishing having well rooted in the rock.

### Theertham

It is called Pavanasam Theertham meaning rid of sins. The devotees participate in this theertha festival to rid of their sins. The Pavanasam Theertham is presently a deep well located on the south side of the rock. The current theertha well does not measure up to a great tank that existed before the destruction of the temple by the Portuguese. The Portuguese destroyed not only a great tank but also a reservoir of water located on the rocky place. The present Pavanasam Theertham, though small, but it affords Theertham facilities for the devotees of Thirukoneswarar.

### CONCLUSION

Dr Paul E. Pieris, an eminent scholar records in R.A.S. Journal that even during the pre-historic days, there were five Iswaram temples dedicated to Lord Parameswara of which one was at Koneswaram. In the annals of history of this very ancient temple it has been recorded that this temple was submerged owing to natural calamity but it was re-built. Through passage of time it went into a state of disrepair

but Prince Kulakodan renovated the temple and established an endowment for the maintenance of the temple.

Again under the Portuguese rule, the temple was looted and plundered and the temple building was razed to the ground. But the temple caretakers were quick enough to remove the deities in time and hid them.

In the year 1944 and 1950, the temple icons were unearthed and a temple was built and accordingly the icons were installed. The Maha Kumba Abishegam for Koneswaram temple was held in 1963. It is apparent that Lord Konechcharer is here to stay in this revered site for the benefit of the Siva worshippers.

Publications on Koneswarar includes:

- *Trincomalee Bronzes* – R.A.S. Journal, by Dr W. Balendra
- *Thirukonesar Alaya Kumba Abisheka Malar*, 1963 (Tamil)
- *Thirukoneswaram* (Tamil), by Pulavar V. Somaskandar and A. Sriskandarajah, 1963
- *Koneswaram* (Tamil), by S. Sunasingam, of Peradeniya 1973.



Above: Front view of the Koneswaram Sivan Temple. Left: Side entrance of the temple.

# Muneswaram Temple Chilaw, Sri Lanka

*A historical and archeological site of considerable importance*

## INTRODUCTION

Among the celebrated ancient temples for worship of Lord Iswara which emerged in various parts of Sri Lanka, is the Muneswaram Temple in Chilaw (Cilapam). The temple of prominence, was extolled as a temple of great antiquity. The presiding deity is called 'Sri Munnai Nather' (Lord of Antiquity) and His Consort is Vadivambikai Devi (Goddess of beautiful form). This holy place is referred to as 'Alageswaram Sanakumar Samhitha' of Sri Sivapuranam. Muneswaram being a great Saiva Shrine became a centre of highest devotion where people of various categories paid homage to the presiding deity. Thus this place is elevated to a sacred site (punya ksetra) and renowned for its Moorthy (deity), Sthala (sacred place) and Theertham (sacred river) aspects.

## PURANIC VERSION

According to Dakshina Kailasa Puranam, the shrine Munna Natha Lingam was established by Lord Brahma for worship by Himself, and for worship by Vishnu Mahendran, Munivars, Sages and Seers.

Sri Rama Bhagawan is to have found solace here, on his return home after the Ramayana episode with a heavily weighted conscience thinking of the many deaths in the (Rama/Ravana) battle. He experienced relief from 'Bramasakti' that had worried him, so he made a stay here, took a sacred bath in the temple tank and performed pujas and then worshipped Munna Nathar and Vadivambikai.

A puranic legend has it that once a Rakshasar



called Mahishasuran was causing havoc killing the men and Devas and destroying their towns and villages. Because of his immense tapas powers, neither the Gods nor Devas were able to kill him. At the request of the sages and rishis, Maha Vishnu assumed the form of Mohini, while Siva took the form of the handsome hunter Pichandi. The son from their association was Hari Hara Puthran Ayyappan, who killed Mahishasuran.

## HISTORY

It is said that Muneswaram Temple is one of the temples renovated by Prince Vijaya after being crowned as King of Lanka, for the benefit of his subjects. It is also said that the Chola King improved and maintained the temple during their occupation of the island.

The temple flourished due to the munificence of King Parakrama Bahu (1412–1467) who gifted several villages and paddy fields. The reputed wealth of the land attracted the greed of the Portuguese invaders who destroyed and razed it to the ground in the year 1578. About 200 years later, the temple was restored for worship by King Kerthi Raja Singh, in 1753. Later it was renovated in 1875, by efforts made by Sri Cumaraswamy Kurukkal; it was improved in 1919 and further in 1963 with support by Hindus from all over Ceylon .

Prof. A Velupillai in his article 'Munnacuvaram' (Muneswaram) Kovil says that "In analyzing the historical events in this kovil, we can say that this kovil stood as a centre for maintaining the Saiva traditions and aagamic ritual system".

### LOCATION

Muneswaram of Chilaw is in the Puttalam District of Western Sri Lanka. It is about 82km to the North of Colombo. Proceeding to Chilaw via the highway and on reaching Chilaw town, turn east and proceed for about 7km to reach the temple. The road from Chilaw leading to the temple of Muneswaram goes through an extensive paddy field. The temple is referred to as

the "Great Temple" (Periya Kovil in Tamil and Maha Devale in Sinhalese). There are four other small temples surrounding the Muneswaram Temple.

### TEMPLE

The temple stands as a great monument surrounded by various other small shrines.

The main temple faces the east and has three prakaras (Pathway) around it. A sacred pond is situated in front of the temple and a Bo-tree stands by the side as sthala vriksha (sacred tree). The temple Mandapams and related areas are as follows:

- Arthamandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Nirtha Mandapam
- Sthamba Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam
- Yaga Salai

The main sanctum here is the one which is the largest in comparison to the other temples in Sri Lanka. The structure above the sanctum (vimanam) is also correspondingly large in proportion. The various architectural aspects of this temple conform to the prescription laid down in the aagamas.

The Garbagraha and the adjoining hall



A view from the Maha Mandapam

(Arthamandapam) are built in granite stone keeping with the traditional art of temple construction. The present 3-tiered vimanam rises to a height of 46 feet.

The 'Stupi' (Vimanam above Garbagraha or Moolasthanam) was originally constructed in the 18th century by King Kerthi Raja Singh. Some of the main idols installed for worship at this temple are very ancient and were there before the temple was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1578.

Some icons were recovered accidentally from the well inside the temple courtyard (Thirumanjana well) when it was re-dug.

Apparently the idols were hidden by the pious devotees for safety reasons during the raid by the Portuguese.

### Deities

Presiding deity:

- Vadivambikai Ambal Sametha Munna Nather

Other deities:

- Vigneswarar
- Durga Devi
- Vairavar
- Lord Natarajar (a bronze idol enshrined in a separate hall)
- Sixty three icons of devotees of Siva (Sivanadiyars) located in a shrine room.
- Murugan
- Vishnu
- Sandeswarar (installed as independent shrine)

A temple for the Navagrahams (nine planets) also finds a place in the hall adjoining the Sthamba Mandapam (Flag staff hall)

Deities depicting other forms of Lord Siva are also installed namely Chandikeswarar Moorthy and Bhiksatana.

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree of Muneswaram temple is Bo-tree.

### Theertham

Maayavan River, which is located at a distance of approximately 5km from the temple.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held six times daily. The temple doors open at 5.00am and close at 9.00pm.

Daily Pujas are as follows:

- Ushatkalam or Thiruvanantal
- Kaalaisanthi
- Uchchikalam
- Sayaratchai
- Erandaamkalam
- Arthajamam

### Major Festivals

The annual festivals of this temple last for 28 days commencing with the flag hoisting ceremony at the 'Sthamba Mandapam' of the temple. The festival concludes with the water cutting ceremony in the holy theertham of Maayavan River on the full moon day. The 28-day festival occurs in the month of Aavani (August/September). In addition there is a festival lasting for 10 days.

On the day of 'Paktosavam' the images of 63 nayanmars are taken around in accompaniment with the main Utsava Moorthys. This particular festival is conducted only at this temple in Sri Lanka.

A 9-day Navarathiri festival is observed on a grand scale. On the Vijayathasami day of the festival, Goddess Vadivambikai Ambal is taken in procession for the Maanampu festival.

Other festivals include Maasi Magam a theertha Utsavam of a 9-day festival for Ambal, Sukiravaram, Thai Ponggal, Thaipusam, Sivarathiri, Panguni Uthiram, Deepavali, Kanthasashti and Marghazi Thiruvembavai.

## CONCLUSION

Traditions invest Muneswaram with a degree of sanctity and antiquity which cannot be surpassed by other Hindu temples in Sri Lanka. In fact, it occupies a position which is unique in many ways. It has played a vital role in the development of the religious and cultural traditions especially of the Hindus living in the island over a long period of time.

As in the days of Kotte Kingdom, Muneswaram still continues to be a focal point of Hindu-Buddhist interaction. The temple is supported and patronized by Buddhists who could be seen at the temple in large numbers during the festival seasons. There has always been free access for all visitors to the temple although Vedic and Aagamic forms of worship are observed here much more meticulously than at any other Hindu temples in the island of Sri Lanka.

In the early days, Tamils predominantly populated this region but is not so now. Presently, a good number of Buddhist, Muslims and Christians are residing in this region.

The musicians of this temple cannot speak Tamil but are serving this temple for generations playing the drums and musical instruments and they claim that these skills have been handed down from father to son and so on.

This temple always practice the philosophy - one God and one family and welcome worshippers regardless of race or religion and accordingly Buddhist, Muslims and Christians also congregate at this temple for worship.

It is understood from a local publication, that plans are underway to construct a 5-tiered rajagopuram.



Left: Side entrance of the Muneswaram temple. Above:  
Theertham - Maayavan river which is 5km from the temple.



# Thiruthambaleswaram (Naguleswaram) Keerimalai Sivan Temple

*One of the five recognized ancient Iswarams in Sri Lanka*



## INTRODUCTION

The Keerimalai Sivan temple is said to be one of the oldest temple in Jaffna Peninsula. It occupies a prominent position among the Hindu temples in the northern part of the Island because of its importance as a pilgrimage centre and the close connections with the Tamil Kings of the Jaffna Kingdom. Its location at the sacred site on the northern coast of Jaffna where the post funerary rites are conducted, have invested it with a degree of sanctity comparable with other famous temples.

Tradition goes back to the era when the Nagas occupied the Northern Nagadeepam territory

and sometime during those days, there existed in Naga city of Nagul, a temple for the Supreme God Iswara. In ancient history, the Yalpana Vaipava Malai states, that this temple was one of the four celebrated temples for Iswaran erected by King Vijaya. Thiruthambaleswaram came to be known as Naguleswaram after it was consecrated by Sage Nagulamuni. Tradition also associates the location with the site where Nagula Munivar successfully performed tapas for the transformation of his facial appearance. 'Nagulam' is the Sanskrit word for 'Keeri' (Mongoose).

## PURANIC AND LEGENDARY VERSION

Traditionally, the Maha Bharatam mentions that this auspicious theerthasthalam has been visited by important personages such as Musukuntha Chakravarthy, Nalla Maha Raja and Arjuna (Pancha Pandavar), on their pilgrimage to the southern (Dakshina) sthalams for the remission of their sins.

Another legend frequently associated with this place is the Maha Bharata story of Jamathakiri, who incurred the displeasure of sage Pituku Munivar by not placating him, after having invited him for the observance of ancestral ceremonies. For this, she had to suffer a curse which changed her facial appearance to that of a 'Keeri' (Mongoose). This however, disappeared when she performed ablutions in the sacred fresh spring waters of Naguleswaram, where the curse was lifted.

Originally 'Keerimalai' referred to the limestone rock projecting into the sea which is situated about half-a-mile east of the springs. This rock was called 'Keerimalai' meaning the mongoose-hill, which in Sanskrit came to be known as 'Nagulagiri'. The name of this hill later became the name of the land.

It is said that the Nagulagiri rock projected into the sea for a considerable distance and the original Siva temple 'Thiruthambaleswaram' with its ascending tower was built on the top of this rock. There was a separate temple for His Consort 'Thiruthambaleswari'. These temples were destroyed by inundation of the sea. During the eighth century, King Ukkirasinghan who ruled from Kathiramalai (Kantharodai) re-built this temple in its present site. From that time it came to be known as Naguleswaram or the Keerimalai Sivan Temple. During later times, it was supported and administered by the Kings of Jaffna.

The name and fame of the sthalams spread far and wide. In the 15th century, we read in history, that the celebrated Tamil King who built Nallur Kandaswamy Temple, visited this theertham, and having paid obeisance to the Lord of Naguleswaram, took charge of the place, for maintenance by the State. The Sthala was also known as 'Kantharua Nagaram' (town) and 'Veenaa Kaanapuram.'

Originally, the well-famed Sivan sthalam had three Prakaram and five entrance towers



Keerimalai Sivan Temple under renovations. Photo taken in 2011.

(Gopurams), Mandapams. Presiding and Parivara Deities all of which have been laid according to the principles of 'Silpasastra'. Sculptures and figures in the niches of the wall of Garbagraha enhanced the aesthetic appearance of the temple.

The Portuguese captured Jaffna in 1621 and began a systematic destruction of the Hindu temples in the Peninsula. Parasupani Iyer, the Chief Priest of the Naguleswaram temple at that time, when he heard that the Portuguese officers with their soldiers were coming to Keerimalai, wrapped up the Siva and Parvathy images along with the ornaments and temple jewels and dumped them into the temple well and filled up with several layers of sea sand to cover them. The Portuguese officials searched the place for temple treasure but were not able to find anything. The Chief Priest migrated to Baticaloa.

The British who succeeded the Dutch in Jaffna allowed the local people to rebuild their Hindu temples, and pursue their native religious practices.

The temples of Keerimalai were restored 260 years after their destruction by the Portuguese. Arumuga Navalar of Vannarpannai, the architect of Hindu and Tamil renaissance was a key figure who tirelessly worked for the reconstruction of this historic temple. He completed his task with the support of several beneficiaries and philanthropists and the consecration ceremony was held in the month of Aani (June/July) 1882.

In 1918, there was an accidental fire which had caused considerable damage to the temple building and properties. Repairs and renovations were undertaken periodically since that time. In 1953, the reconsecration ceremony was held on a grand scale. As from 1954, the Mahotsava and other annual festivals were celebrated. In 1990, the temple as usual was celebrating the Kethara Viratham. It was reported that the temple area was subjected to bombing by the Sri Lankan Airforce. Thereafter Keerimalai area came under the classification of High Security Zone (HSZ) and the Sri Lankan Army took full control of the area. For about 10 years, access was denied for worship in the temple.

However in the year 2000, with special

permission, the restoration works commenced with Balasthapanam. The Rajagopuram Project which was at a standstill at foundation stage was also included in the proposed renovation project. The temple after 39 long years held the Maha Kumba Abishegam on 6th February 2012, which gave new hope and new strength to the Hindus of Jaffna. The temple's previous Maha Kumba Abishegams were held in 1973, 1953, and 1885.

### LOCATION

Naguleswaram Temple is situated on the Northern sea coast of Jaffna Peninsula near the Nagula mountain (hill). It is about 20km from Jaffna town and 2km from the Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple.

### THE TEMPLE

The temple is known as 'Sri Nagulambika Sametha Naguleswaraswamy Thevasthanam'.

The temple has the following mandapams:

- Arthamandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Sthamba Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam
- Mandapam for the performance of rites for the departed souls



Interior view after renovation



Keerimalai holy tank

There are also various madams for lodging and for resting.

The temple is complete with Moorthy Sthalam and Punniya Theertham. Lord Naguleswarar and His Consort Nagulambikai are the main deities in this sthala.

Other deities:

- Pillaiyar
- Somaskanthar
- Mahalethcumy
- Vairavar
- Nadarajar
- Shanmugar
- Maha Vishnu
- Siva in the form of Panchalingam
- Navagrahas
- Durga

### Theertham

The Theertham was earlier known as Kandaki

Theertham. Unlike that of ordinary pools, the water in Keerimalai tank, has therapeutic value and the site itself is of historical and religious importance. Spring waters originating from the rocks of Tellippalai-Maviddapuram, an elevated area of 30 feet, flows through the crevices and fissures of the carbonated rocks and encounters sea water as it emerges at Keerimalai.

Therefore the spring water flow at Keerimalai is of great value and bathing in its water imparts therapeutic medicinal benefit to human body. The chemical values and minute electrolytic charges duly acquired elevate the functioning of the human body system.

It is believed the 'Shiva Rupa and Shakti Rupa' (sea water/spring water) confluence here and hence its sanctity and purity.

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree of this holy temple is Banyan Tree.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held six times daily commencing with Thirupalli Eluchi.

### Major Festivals

Nithiya and Naimithiya Pujas and major festivals have been carried out since the reign of King Pararajasekaran. The Maasi Mahotsava festival, a 15-day festival which is held in the Tamil month of Maasi (February/March) concludes with Sivarathri and Theertham. However, all the religious activities ceased under the rule of the Portuguese.

Traditionally, at the concluding day of the Mahotsavam (Aadi Amavasai) of the Sri Kandaswamy Temple Maviddapuram, Lord Murugan goes in procession to Keerimalai for the Theetha Utsavam and it is a joint festival celebrated by both the temples.

The Sivan Temple at Keerimalai also celebrates Devi Mahotsavam on the day of Chithira Pournami. On this auspicious day a devotee is expected to fast for his/her departed mother.

### Other Festivals

- Tamil New Year
- Vaikasi Visakam
- Aani Uthiram
- Aavani Moolam
- Maanambu
- Aippasi Velli
- Karthigai Vilaku
- Thiruvembavai
- Thai Ponggal
- Thai Poosam
- Pangguni Uthiram

## CONCLUSION

This holy and ancient sthala of Lord Naguleswaram was worshipped by the Chola Princess Marutha Pira Vika Valli. She and her maids camped at a site called 'Kumaarathi Pallam' near Keerimalai. King Ukkirasinghan of Jaffna Kingdom a devotee of Lord Nagulaswarar also camped at the same site. They met and eventually got married. King Ukkirasinghan helped his princess wife to build the Mavidaapuram Kandaswamy Temple.

Aadi Amavasai is one occasion where the temple is thronged with devotees who would participate in the Theertham and pray for the departed souls. Keerimalai has been the Aadi Amavasai scene for centuries and centuries with Hindus coming here in remembrance of the departed ancestors by way of Tarpana, Shraddha and pinda.

The most important of the treatises on Nakuleswaram is the 'Nakulacala Puranam' written by Erampa Aiyar (1847–1914). He is the son of Cuppiramuniya Catriyar of Matakal.

Another text 'Nakulamalai Kuravanci' written by Vicuvanata Catriyar of Araly is a work of considerable poetic merit. The author who lived during the mid-nineteenth century was the son of Narayana Catriyar, a descendant of Iramalinkar who published the 'Vakkiya Panchakam' (almanac) on 16th May 1667.

Naguleswaram at Keerimalai is one of the oldest Sivan temple in Sri Lanka. Over several hundreds of years this revered temple along with Maviddapuram Kandaswamy temple situated nearby had propogated a unique brand of Saivism, blending traditional religious concepts with local customs distinctive to the people of Jaffna.

## Nallai Nathaswamy Koil, Nallur

*Also known as Saddanathar Kovil – the temple of the Tamil Kings who ruled Jaffna*

### INTRODUCTION

This temple was erected by Vijayakalinga Ariyan (Kulangai) the first Ariya Chakaravathy King of Jaffna. He built Nallur as his capital city and sought divine protection to the celebrated city by erection of the following temples located in the four corners of the city:

- Nallainathaswamy Temple also known as 'Saddanatha Sivan Kovil' to the North
- Kailayanathar Temple to the South
- Veyilukantha Pillayar Temple to the East
- Veeramakali Amman Temple to the West

The presiding moorthy is Nallainathar and the Ambal was known as 'Nallai Nayaki'. The temple was located in the proximity to the King's Palace in Sankili Thoppu.

The Nallai Nathar temple together with the other three temples were well-maintained by the succeeding Tamil Kings of Jaffna notably Kanaga Sooriya Singai Ariyan (1440–1478).

### HISTORY

History has recorded the demolition of the temple,



along with several other temples in the year 1621, when the Kingdom of Jaffna was taken by Philip de Oliveira, the Portuguese Governor. The stones from the demolished temples were taken to build the fort in Jaffna. It has also been recorded that the priests of this temple deposited the temple Vighrams in the neighbouring pond, before the temple was destroyed.

Early in the 19th century (about 1815) when there was a revival of Hinduism in the Island, one devotee named Thambaiyapillai felt the divine urge to revive the temple. Excavating the Thirukulam (sacred pond), some of the Vighrams of old were discovered. The Nallai Nayaki Ambal Vighram, which was found intact and which had special sculptural features and craftsmanship, was accepted for re-installation and the inner temple was built with Linga Moorthy in the moolasthanam.

The other statues that were unearthed have been handed over to the Jaffna Museum. They include Gajalakshmi, Thakshana Moorthy, Valli-Deivayanai and Subramaniam on Peacock carved from one stone, a Saneeswarar statue, etc. These have been identified by a conservationist as belonging to the Vijayanagar period.

The temple was later improved by the progeny of the revivalist named Shivapragasapillai. Gradually improvements and additions were made by generous devotees. The Prakara Moorthy temples and other structures needed in a Sivan temple were added on accordingly. The bell tower was later constructed and other restoration work of the old structures was carried out.

## LOCATION

Point Pedro Road, Nallur

## TEMPLE

The temple has five mandapams:

- Arthamandapam
- Snapana Mandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Stamba Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam.

## Deities

Presiding deity:

- Nallai Nayaki Ambal Sametha
- Nallai Natha Lingam

Other deities:

- Vinayagar
- Pancha Lingams
- Mahaletchumy
- Saneeswarar
- Vairavar
- Thatchina Moorthy
- Durga
- Nagathambiran
- Subramaniam
- Navagrahas
- Sooriam/Chandran
- Lingotbhavar
- Panchamugalingam

## DAILY PUJAS & MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held five times a day.

### Major Festivals

Twice a year, the Flag Hoisting ceremony is held for the following major festivals:

- A 10-day Pangguni Uthiram festival at the Sivan entrance
- A 10-day Aadipuram and theertham festival at the Ambal entrance

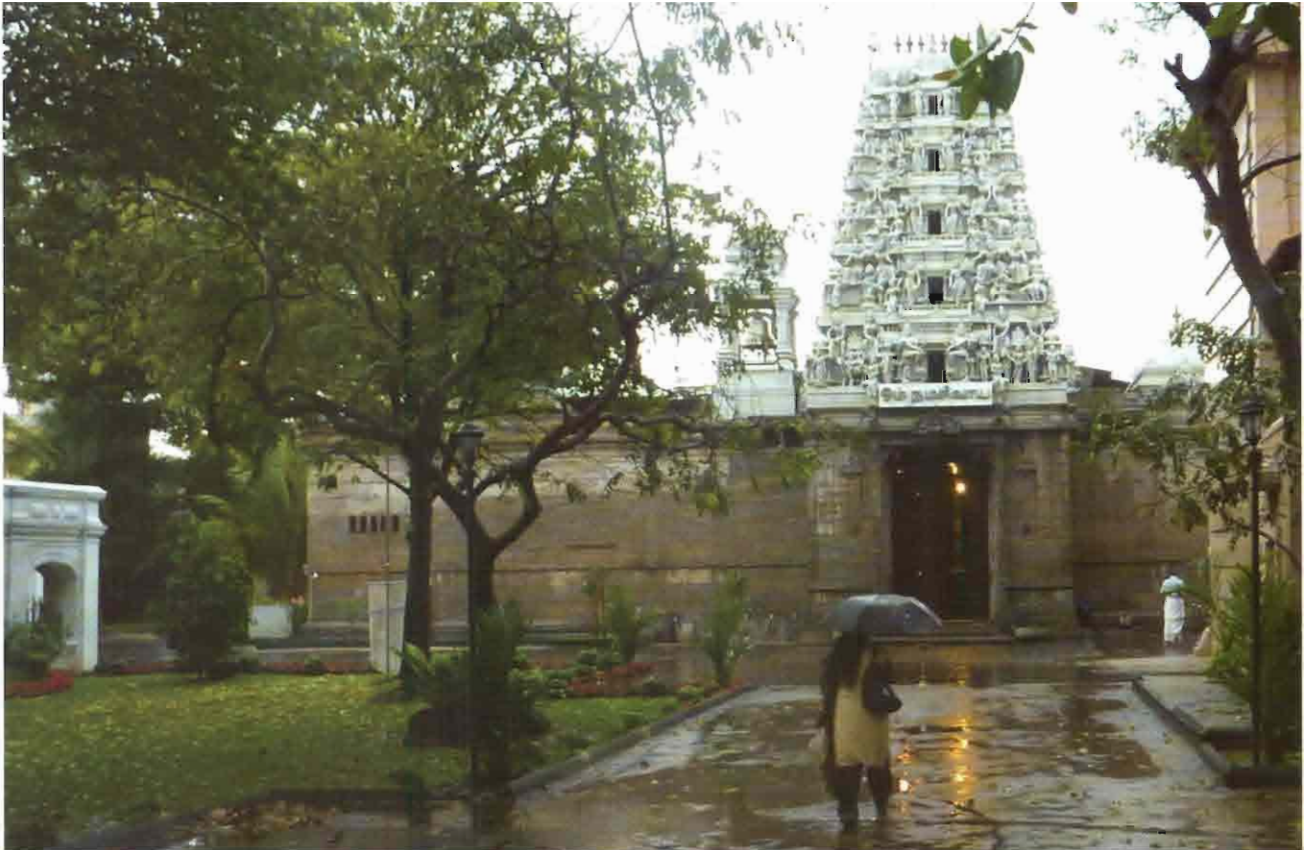
Other festivals relating to Sivan such as Sivarathiri, Aani Uthiram, Marghazhi Thiruvembavai are also held at this temple.

## CONCLUSION

Nalla Nayaki Ambal Sametha and Nallai Natha Linga Moorthy preside at the Nallur Saddanathar Kovil for tharisanam by the many devotees who reside there. All the pujas and festivals which are usually held at Sivan temples are observed here. The last Maha Kumba Abishegam was held in 1999.

# Sri Ponnambalavaneswarar Temple, Colombo

*Known as the Architectural Gem of South Indian Art*



## INTRODUCTION

In the capital city of Colombo there is a famous Sivan temple called Ponnambalavaneswarar Temple which stands majestically at a road named Srimath Ramanatha Mawatha Street, Kochchikade. The temple was built in the style of Dravidian Architecture using granite stones with crafted columns and with sculptures which was described as 'Architectural Gem' of South Indian Art in Sri Lanka today.

This temple was founded by Mudaliar Arunasalam Ponnambalam, a celebrated person of his time. It was founded in the year 1856 to fulfill the wishes of several residents in that area. Accordingly he bought

a piece of five acre land in Kochchikade in Colombo which is the present premises where now the Sivan temple stands. The Moolamoorthy was Mahalingam and an Amman shrine was positioned on the left side of the temple.

Originally, the temple was managed by the eldest son, Pon. Cumaraswamy and later another of Mudaliar's son, Sir P. Ramanathan took on the management. He was desirous of re-building that small Sivan Temple into a magnificent gem of architecture. He was looking into the possibility of adapting the architecture developed as the Dravidian style where the Dravidians, beginning





South entrance to the Sri Ponnambalavaneswarar Temple.

with the Pallavas, laid the foundations of this style. The Cholas, Pandiyans, Vijayanagar Kings and the Nayakkas perfected the Vimanam and Gopuram.

Sir P. Ramanathan also looked at the Saiva architecture in Polonnaruwa because its contribution to Hindu art and architecture is considerable. During the 10th and 11th century, the Chola extended their suzerainty over Ceylon and Polonnaruwa was their capital city. Later the Cholas were replaced by an indigenous dynasty with links to the Pandyan Court. Kings Vikramabahu I and Gaja Bahu II followed Brahmanic practices.

In 1907, Sir P. Ramanathan proceeded with work to rebuild the Sivan Temple. The work on the proposed Sivan Temple was elaborate. The work included carved granite stone, masonry, conforming in every detail to the style of Dravidian style of architecture. South Indian craftsmen were brought in to work in the temple buildings. The work was slow

as it entailed heavy expenditure coupled with the slow movements of boat load on granite stones suitable for architecture work. However, despite the constraints, the temple was successfully completed in 1912.

### THE TEMPLE

The temple has two prakarams (courtyards) i.e. inner and outer. The main entrance to temple is the east entrance, and the south entrance is the second entrance which faces Sri Sivakama Soundari Ambal Aalayam with a 3-tiered Vimanam of 35 feet in height. There are four mandapams. They are Artha Mandapam, Maha Mandapam, Sthamba Mandapam (Kodisthambam) and Kalyana Mandapam.

The Garbagraham houses the Moola Moorthy – Swarnabaesa Sri Ponnambalavaneswarar and the floor level of the Garbagraham is about three and a half feet above the floor level at Mahamandapam.

The other deities located in the inner and outer prakarams are as follows:

### Inner Courtyard (Prakaram)

- Lord Natarajar is located on the right hand side of the Artha Mandapam facing direct to the South entrance of the Inner prakaram.

At the rear of the moolasthanam the following are located in the order as follows:

- Moola Vinayagar
- Panchalingam
- Somaskantha Moorthy
- Sri Devi, Bhu Devi Sametha Maha Vishnu
- Valli Theivayanai Sametha Subramaniam

Along the Northern corridor the following deities are located:

- Sri Shanmuga Peruman
- Sri Sandeswarar
- Sanneswarar Bhagawan
- Utsava Moorthys

On the eastern side of the corridor, on the right side of the main entrance, the following deities are

located:

- Navagrahams
- Sri Vairavar
- Sri Swarna Vairavar

### Outer Courtyard (Prakaram)

Along the south side outer courtyard, the following aalayams are seen:

- Aanjeneyar Aalayam
- Muthumari Amman Aalayam
- Sri Muneeswarar Aalayam
- On the Eastern side is located the Narthana Vinayagar Aalayam

The other deities in the temple include:

- Vinayagamoorthy
- Lingotbavar
- Durga Ambal
- Thatchinamoorthy
- Sri Brahma

The deities of Suriya Bhagawan and Santhiran are located on either side when entering through the Eastern entrance.

Kodisthambam (Flag post), Nandhi and Palipeedam are located in the main temple. The entrance to the temple is on the eastside with a beautiful fully sculptured 5-tiered Rajagopuram of 51 feet in height, with base area measuring 21 feet in length and 3 feet in width. On either side of the gopura vaasal (entrance) are found beautifully sculptured Dwarapalaks. In the Kalyana Mandapam, one could see pillars depicting Saiva Naayanmars and epics of puranam.

### Bell Tower

The bell tower is located on the left side of the Eastern entrance with a bell of 650 kilogrammes in weight.

### Theertham

The temple theertha tank is called Sri Swarnapushkarani which is located in the outer courtyard. There is a theertha kinaru (well) located within the temple on the leftside of the main entrance.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held six times a day as follows:

- Ushatkalam
- Kaalaisanthi
- Uchchikalam
- Sayaratchai
- Erandaamkalam
- Arthajamam

### Major festivals

Annual Mahotsavam occurs in the month of Panguni [March/April] which is a 10-day festival. In this festival five chariots with the following deities are taken around in procession:

- Vinayagar
- Somaskanthar
- Ambal
- Subramaniam
- Sandeswarar

Prathosa utsavam: Sankiranthi Theertha festival is held on the 1st day of every month. Sri Sakra Puja and Raja Rajeswari utsavam is held on full moon days.

Nithiya Utsavam: In the Mahamandapam is located at the Nithiya Kundam (Fire pit) where the fire is continuously kept burning which is called Nithiyaagni. Rituals at this pit takes place at 7.00am and 7.00pm daily. After the puja in the evening, Ambal Sri Sivakama Soundari Sametha and Ponnambalavaneswarar are taken in procession within the inner courtyard (Prakara) in a small chariot.

During the Aadipuram festival which is a 9-day festival, daily abishegam, pujas and lachcharchanai are performed for Sri Sivakama Soundari Ambal and Thiruoornjal (swing) is held on the 9th day of Aadipuram.

Other festivals include Thaipusam, Maha Sivarathiri, Navarathiri, Kantha Shasti, and Marghazhi Thiruvembavai.

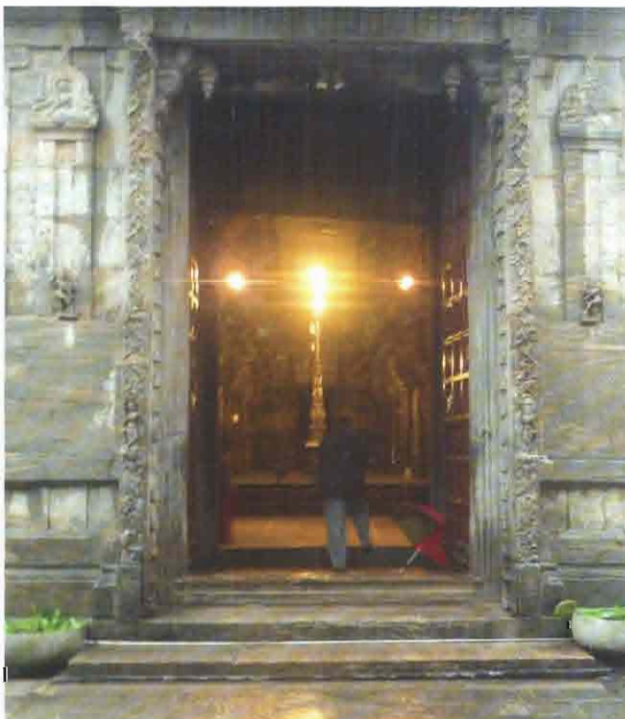
## CONCLUSION

The temple stands out with majestic appearance with the pillars duly crafted and the sculptures with a superb finishing. It has been described by the Kalai Pulavar, K. Navaratnam, in his book on *Development of Art in Ceylon* 1955 as an "Architectural edifice worthy of mention, built during the British period".

The temple is built of granite stones. The pillars and sculptures are the type found in modern temples of South India. The temple maybe considered the 'Architectural Gem' of the South Indian Art in Ceylon today.

A well-managed temple, which ensures that the pujas and the other rituals are performed in accordance with aagamic principles.

The Maha Sivarathiri occurring in February/ March is a very special occasion when all Colombo devotees congregate there all night to witness the abishegams and the pujas at the four watches of the night.



Left top: Theertham. Left: Main entrance to the Sri Ponnambalavaneswarar Temple. Above: Temple pillars intricately sculptured in Dravidian style architecture.

# Thiruketheeswaram Temple, Mannar

*An ancient Hindu sthalam of hoary antiquity in Sri Lanka*



## INTRODUCTION

Saivism is prevalent today in its orthodox form in South India, Sri Lanka, Kashmir and Nepal. The doctrine of Grace, Love, and Bakthi is the distinguishing feature of Saivism and worship is the essence of Saivism.

In Sri Lanka, the Hindus are essentially Saivites – the worshipers of Lord Siva and the temples consecrated to the Lord, act as centres for worship and social gathering.

From ancient times the daily life of the Hindus is

closely associated with temple worship. The temple atmosphere and the religious ceremonies promote a sense of well-being amongst the devotees. For the Hindus in the mundane world, temple worship helps to purify their minds and help in the onward march to salvation.

Long before the arrival of King Vijaya, there was in Sri Lanka, five recognized Iswarams of Siva which claimed and received adoration of all India. These temples were Thiruthambaleswaram situated

in the Nagulagiri hills in the north of the island, later known as Naguleswaram; Thondeswaram situated at Thevendra Devinuvara in the south coast; Munneswaram, situated near Chilaw and Thiruketheeswaram at Mantota both in the west coast and Thirukoneswaram at Trincomalee in the east coast.

The temple of Thiruketheeswaram was already there when Vijaya landed in Lanka. It is an ancient temple on the banks of the Palavi Theertham in Mantai, Mannar. The original name of this city was Mahaduvatta, later known as Mantai and also known as Matoddam. It was a historical settlement where international trade flourished. The word Mantai itself must have evolved out of the word 'maha santhai'.

Tradition has it that Kethu Bhagavan worshipped here and was blessed with a vision of Lord Parameswara thus it came to be known as Thiru-Kethu-Iswaram. Mayan, the father-in-law of Ravana and Emperor of Sri Lankapura, built a temple on this sacred spot installing a Siva Lingam in the sanctum sanctorum.

The songs of Thirugnanasambanthar and Sundara Moorthy Nayanars sanctified this temple and in hymns say that the port of Matoddam or Mantai on the banks of Palavi Theertham was a busy entreport

*"...in the bountiful city of Matoddam surrounded by the sea abounding with boats."*

He also speaks of the surroundings to the temple as being very fertile and luxurious. Saint Sambanthar also spoke in glowing terms of Matoddam.

Tradition has also linked Sage Agastiyar with both Thiruketheeswaram and Koneswaram temples.

Saint Sundarar and Sambanthar through their immortal hymns have linked us with the past, painting a wonderful pen picture of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple setting. Such hymns and songs clearly tell us that the temple with its surroundings was the hub in the life of the people of the area.

During the 7th and 8th centuries, Thiruketheeswaram was reputed in South India as

a great centre for pilgrimage and for Saiva religious tradition. At that prevalent period, the temple must have been a very imposing structure belonging to the Pallava era.

During the reign of the great Chola King Raja Raja Cholan I in the 11th century, the building was greatly improved and a magnificent complex with several gopurams was erected.

In the 13th century, according to a Chidambaram inscription, Sundara Pandyan I seems to have rebuilt the temple in Pandyan style.

### PORTUGUESE RULE (1505–1658)

In 1589, under the Portuguese rule the temples of Matoddam had been systematically destroyed by the Portuguese. The trade of the port was disrupted and when the Portuguese finally destroyed the temple in 1590, the old port was abandoned in favour of Mannar.

When they took final possession, they burned the city of Matoddam, and razed the ancient temple to the ground. The epigraphic records relating to the history of the Thiruketheeswaram temple were all destroyed. To the British who arrived after the Dutch (1658–1796), the site where the temple had existed previously was desolate mound. The whole area gradually became part of the jungle.

### THE RESTORATION

It was Arumuga Navalar, the great Saiva reformer of Jaffna who conceived the idea of restoring the Thiruketheeswaram temple to its ancient glory. Accordingly, he appealed to the Hindu public of Jaffna through his booklet 'Yalapana Samaya Nilai'.

On the 13th December 1893, the Government Agent of Jaffna put up for sale the Crown land of 44 acres of 'jungle land of no economic value, but a sacred spot for the Hindus'. The land was bought by R.R. Palaniyappa Chettiyar on behalf of the Saiva Paripalana Sabai. Later clearing and excavation works were carried out. In 1894 the celebrated Maha Lingam, a Nandhi and a statue of Lord Ganesha were unearthed. These were installed in a small temple built at that site in 1903.

## THIRUKETHEESWARAM RESTORATION SOCIETY

The formal inauguration of the Thiruketheeswaram Temple Restoration Society was held on 24th October 1948 at a public meeting held at the old Kathiresan Kovil Bambalapitiya, Colombo.

The objects of the Society include:

1. The restoration and maintenance of Thiruketheeswaram Temple and its temporalities according to the tenets and ideals of Saivism;
2. The construction and management of Thiruketheeswaram Temple and other temples for divine worship according to the tenets and ideals of Saivism;
3. The establishment and management of Madams, Libraries, Reading Rooms and Schools;
4. The propagation, dissemination and advancement of Saiva religion

An important idea underlying the objects of the society is to restore Thiruketheeswaram as a religious, intellectual and cultural centre of importance in keeping with the historic role played by this ancient city in antiquity. (*The objects as above appeared in the Society's Report for period 1948–1953*)

The Society was planning a large scale re-building of the temple under its President Mr S. Sivapathasundram. The first phase of the building programme was conducted under the direction of Sir Kandiah Vathianathan and the second phase of the construction was conducted under the direction of Mr R. Namasivayam. The progress of construction was abruptly terminated at the site due to the riots of 1983.

During the more recent civil war that plagued the country, the temple at various times was occupied by the Sri Lankan Armed Forces. However under the Chairmanship of Mr R. Namasivayam supported by a band of dedicated workers, the Restoration Society had been revitalized and the devotion finds fulfillment in the Maha Kumba Abishegam held on 6th July 2003.

In January 2010, the President of Sri Lanka declared Thiruketheeswaram as a sacred city for Hindus.

## THE TEMPLE

### Raja Gopuram

A 5-tiered Raja Gopuram rising majestically to a height of 54 feet from the main gateway structure (gopura vaasal). It replaces the earlier structure.

### Temple Bell

The bell is housed in a belfry tower of Chola architectural semblance and it is located at the temple entrance. The bell is four feet in diameter and weighs about two tonnes.

### Mandapams

The main sanctum or Garbagraham and Artha Mandapam (frontal chamber) with imposing Vimanams were built in granite for the presiding deity Ketheeswarar and His Sakti Gowri Ambal.

### Dwasthambam (Flag Post)

In the sthamba Mandapam, a Dwasthambam of 31 feet in height wrapped up in copper sheeting was erected.

### Nandhi and Palipeedam

The Nandhi and Palipeedam are located in front of the sanctum to Gowri Ambal.

### Other Mandapams

Other mandapams include Maha Mandapam, Vasantha Mandapam or Kalyana Mandapam and Thiruchuttu Mandapam (inner corridor)

The Maha Kumba Abishegam was held at 9.11am on 4th September 1976 for the Main Sivan and Ambal Moorthikal and the newly built 16 prakara shrines.

### The Deities

The presiding Moolastana Moorthy is Ketheeswara Natha Sivalingam with a 42 feet high Vimanam

above the Moola Moorthy.

Gowri Ambal (Giver of boons) is enthroned in the temple with a 34 feet high Vimanam.

The other deities in the temple include Vinayaka Moorthy and Somaskanthamoorthy. There is also a Vishnu shrine which is in a standing form along with His two Consorts. The Vairavar and Navagraha shrines are located in the eastern prakara. The Nadarajah statue in the temple is a source of inspiration to many pilgrims who congregate.

Kethu Bhagawan gains a special place in this temple where he performed penitence and thapas and was blessed with the benign vision of the Lord.

Other deities in the temple include:

- Maha Vishnu
- Panchalingam
- Arumugaswamy
- Surian / Santhiran
- Thirugnanasambanthar
- Ragu
- Pathikam Paadya Suntharar
- Lingam
- Old Mahalingam
- Murugan
- Thevar Sabhai
- Sandeswarar
- Sekilar
- Santhaana Kuravar
- Thatchinamoorthy
- Thurga

The figures of the blessed sixty three personages who have been acknowledged as Saiva Saints are to be found along the Southern prakara. The temple has a number of madams.

### **Sacred Tree (Sthala Vrisksha)**

The Suma tree (Vanni tree) - Prosopis picigara is the sacred tree.

### **Theertham**

The holy theertham is Palavi Theertham.

## **DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS**

### **Daily Puja**

5.00am	Hailing of the dawn and the Divine awakening from slumbers (Thiruppalli Eluchi)
7.35am	Kaalaisanthi
12.00 noon	Uchchikalam
5.00pm	Rituals at twilight
6.00pm	Sayaratchai
7.35pm	Arthajamam

### **Annual Festivals**

January	Paalavi Theertham
Feb/March	Maha Sivarathiri
Mar/April	Pangguni Uthiram
May	Mahotsava Annual 10 day Festival
June /July	Aani Uthiram
August	A three day festival (kataragama)
Sept/Oct	Navaraathiri Kethara Gowri Fast
November	Somavaaram
December	Thiruvembavai

## **CONCLUSION**

Since early medieval days, this Shrine has been a place of pilgrimage renowned for its sacred images of Siva as Thiruketheeswarar and Gowri Ambal, with deep and lasting veneration. For some time in the past the temple was in complete disarray. Now it reverberates with the mantras, chimes of the temple bells bringing all the Hindus together once again.

The Thiruketheeswaram temple, an ancient sthalam in the Mannar District of Jaffna, is held in a position of pre-eminence because of its great antiquity, the degree of sanctity invested by tradition and its reputation as a centre of pilgrimages.



Palavi Theertham, Thiruketheeswaram

## SHORT NOTES

### **FLOWERS AND LEAVES FOR WORSHIP OF LORD SIVA**

In the worship of Lord, flowers are offered as a mark of honour. These flowers symbolically stand for their fragrance and substances too. The greatness and legend behind it is described in various Puraanas.

For the worship of Lord Siva, Vilvam leaf and Thumba flowers when used along with other paraphernalia of worship, the deity is believed to be immensely pleased.

The shape of Vilvam leaves symbolizes the Thirisoolam held by Lord Siva and also His three eyes. Performing puja to Lord Siva with the Vilvam removes sin and gives liberation.



# Vannai Vaitheeswarar Koil, Yarlpanam

*Also known as Pattinathu and Chettiyar Sivan Temple*

## INTRODUCTION

Vaithilinga Chettiyar son of Gopala Chettiyar built this temple in the year 1790 after obtaining special permission from the Dutch rulers of Ceylon. His father Gopala Chettiyar is from Thiruvapur, South India.

This is one of the few instances, where the Dutch Government eased their tolerances, to other religions, a feature noticeable during the latter part of their regime. which lasted from 1658 to 1796.

Vaithilinga Chettiyar was a leading merchant and one who enjoyed great influence with the Government. Thus, he obtained the release of Nalla Mappana Vanniyan, Chief of Panakamam. The Vanniyan has been held for treason. Chettiyar obtained his release and the necessary ransom money was paid to the Dutch Government. In gratitude Vanniyan donated to the temple that Chettiyar was building, 20,000 palmyrah trees for timber.

## LOCATION

The temple is located along Kankesanthurai Road in the Vannarpannai area, Jaffna town.

## TEMPLE

The temple construction was done complete with

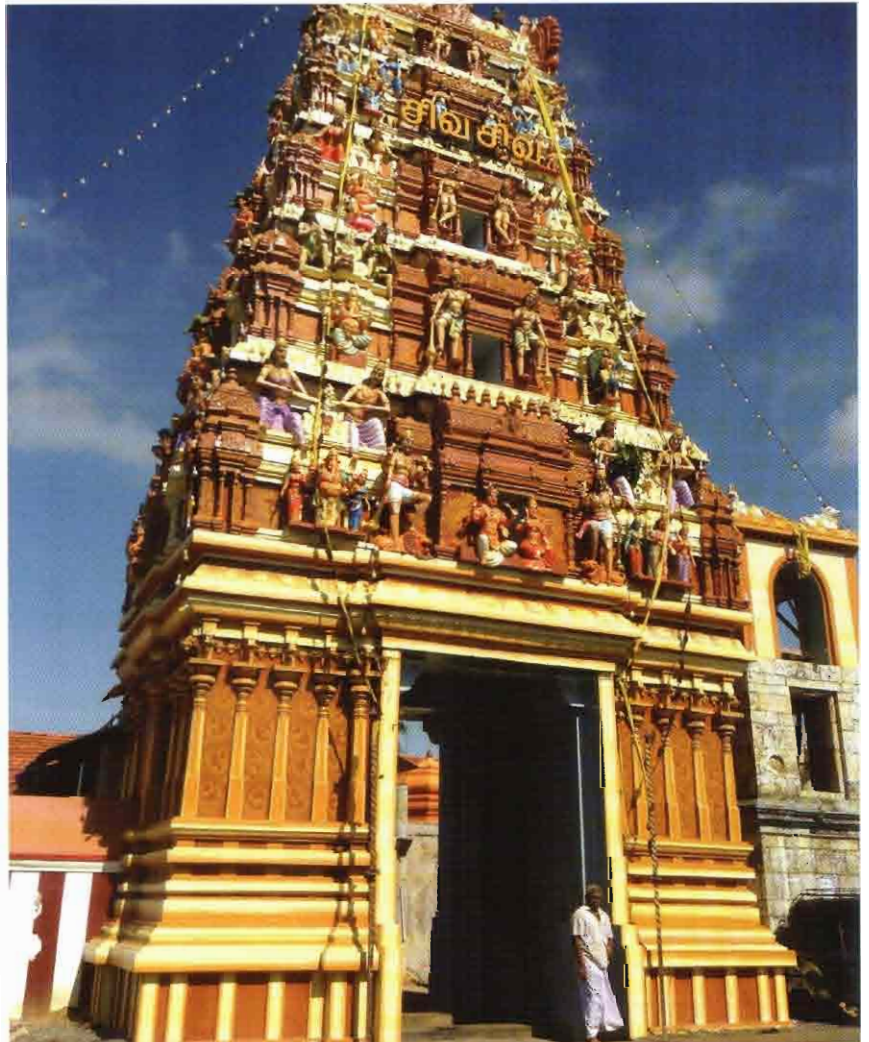


Photo by S. Makeswaran

all traditional requirement of a Sivan Temple. The inner of the three prakarams is replete with parivara Moorthy temples.

In the north east corridor of the second prakara the Vasantha Mandapam is located. The Sithamirtha Puskarani holy theertham is located outside the second prakaram. The third prakara area forms the street stretch. A 16 pillar Mandapam (hall) enhances the beauty of the area and its surroundings.

The main deity is Vaitheeswara Peruman and His Consort is Thaiyal Nayaki Ambal. The recently built 5-tiered Rajagopuram stands out majestically show-casing the sculptured icons adorning the Rajagopuram.

The Garbagraham housing Vaitheeswara Peruman faces the east and the Garbagraham for Thaiyal Nayaki Ambal faces the south.

The temple has the following Mandapams:

- Artha Mandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Nirtha Mandapam
- Sthamba Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The holy tree of this temple is the Vanni tree (Suma tree)

### Theertham

The holy theertham is called 'Sithamirtha Puskarani'.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas:

5.00am	Ushatkalam
6.00am	Kaalaisanthi
12.00 noon	Uchchikalam
5.00pm	Sayaratchai
6.00pm	Erandaamkalam
7.00pm	Arthajamam

### Major Festivals:

The temple's Mahotsava festival is the 21-day festival for Sivan ending with a theertham on full moon day and coinciding with Pangguni Uthiram (March/April).

Aadi Puram is an **Ambal Devi** utsavam which is a 10-day festival and it concludes with theertham on new moon day in July each year.

## CONCLUSION

The Vannai Vaitheeswara Sivan Temple is well endowed. Record has it that the famous Saiva reformer, Sri-La-Sri Arumuga Navalar held his maiden religious discourse on 21st December 1847 in this revered temple and so did Sri Swaminatha Desikar (the founder Guru of Nallai Aatheenam) in 1936 at the age of eighteen.

## SHORT NOTES

### RUDRAKSHAM [URUTHIRACHUM]

'Rudraksham' is a seed of a type of berry tree and it is considered most holy because of its medicinal and spiritual benefits. The rudraksham is one of the symbols of Lord Siva and myth has it that the Rudraksham seeds were created from the tears of Lord Siva. 'Rudra' denotes the fierce form of Lord Siva and 'aksham' symbolizes His eyes.

It is said that the Rudraksha seeds have a unique, natural opening that is not found in any other seeds. While bathing with the Rudraksha chain, ailments such as cold, coughing, sneezing and asthma can be cured. People suffering from high blood pressure have to bathe in cold water by keeping the Rudraksha beads on their head in order to bring down the pressure. Chest pains (ie. heart problems) can be cured by applying the paste of the Rudraksha beads (rubbed with water on a stone). By daily drinking the water in which the Rudraksha beads are soaked, the heat of the body is reduced.

## Thondeswaram

*The fifth Eeswaram temple of ancient Sri Lanka*

Dr Paul E. Peiris, a Sinhalese ethnologist and antiquarian of international repute, has pointed out to the five “eeswaram” (Saivite Shrines) on the four cardinal directions of the compass located on the shore-line of Ceylon predating the birth of Buddha as evidence of the ancient Tamil habitation of the island.

Ptolemy, the Alexandrian carto-grapher of the 2nd century AD, has left behind a map of Ceylon on which some of these “eeswarams” are marked and names of places show a distinctly recognizable Tamil language origin.

It is said that the Pancha Eeswarams are the five early Siva temples of ancient Sri Lanka.

This book contains write-up of four of the Eeswarams. They are:

1. Koneswaram Sivan Temple, Trincomalee
2. Muneswaram Temple, Chilaw
3. Thiruthambaleswaram Temple (Keerimalai Sivan Temple) and
4. Thiruketheswaram Temple, Mannar district.

The fifth temple of the Pancha Eeswaram is Thondeswaram which was said to have been located in Devanthurai. (Dondra Head), a historic port town in the south coast of Sri Lanka near Matara. Unfortunately this historic temple is no more in existence.

In this respect historians assert with archaeological evidence that there existed a Sivan temple in a place now called Dondra Head, which was at one time a historic port town bearing a Tamilised name of Devanthurai. This town stood near Matara in the south coast of Sri Lanka. It was one of the most celebrated Hindu Temple complex housing the temples for Siva, Vishnu, Ganesha, Muruga and



Kanagi. Other names for this temple complex are: Devanthurai Koil, Thenavaram Koil, Chandrasekarar Aalayam and Chandramouleswaram etc.

Historical records indicate that there were two temples at that site – one dedicated to Lord Siva and the other dedicated to Lord Vishnu. It is said that the Devanthurai Temple was built during the middle of the 7th century. Records also affirm the existence of a Siva temple and a Vishnu temple at this site during the rule of King Vijaya Bahu VI in the 14th century.

It is said that the Devanthurai temple owned the entire property and land of the town as well as the surrounding villages. The many deities housed in this temple complex are historically attested in grants, inscriptions and in contemporary literary records.

The temple was built overlooking the Indian Ocean. A high tower acted as a lighthouse guiding the ships at sea. Port town Devanthurai was a prosperous pilgrimage centre.

Then came the turning point, when in 1587, the Portuguese plundered and looted the temple complex of its riches before leveling the complex to the ground. The Hindus mostly Tamils who were residing there moved out and migrated to other areas.

During the 18th century when the British Government allowed the local population to rebuild their religious institutions and pursue their own faith, a Buddhist Vihara was built over the ruins of the old Devanthurai temple complex.

The name of the historic port town of 'Devanthurai' eventually went into oblivion. The place is now known as DEVINUWARA. During the latter part of the British rule a Vishnu Devale was built near the Vihara according to Singhala Buddhist tradition.

Thondeswaram an ancient Siva temple of Devanthurai which was also known by many other names has been obliterated from the map.

Today the locals living there vehemently deny that there was such a celebrated Hindu temple complex ever existed at that site.

The existence of the said Vishnu Temple Devendra Munai (Dondra Head) is being officially

acknowledged by the Sri Lanka Government through a booklet. The booklet was printed and published by the Department of Hindu Religion and Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Regional Department, Hindu Religion and Hindu Culture and Tamil affairs.

The booklet generally mentions about the Hindu temples in Sri Lanka and lists out the important Hindu temples with a brief write up. It begins with a FOREWORD by the Minister Hon. Chelliah Raajadurai and goes on to touch on the Hindu Temples in Sri Lanka inter alia the following was said:

*"Next to India it is Sri Lanka which has several temples located all over the country from Naguleswaram in the North to the Maha Vishnu Temple, at Devendra Munai in the South, and Muneswaram in the West to Thiruketheeswaram in the East. Hence most fittingly Sri Lanka is called 'SIVA BOOMI!'"*

This booklet also lists out and state briefly about some of the important temples. The relevant passage about the Vishnu Temple is as follows:

*"DEVINUWARA VISHNU TEMPLE  
Also known as Devendra Munai Vishnu Temple.  
This is on the South East coast of Sri Lanka near Matara and dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Apart from Hindus, a large number of Singhala devotees also flock to worship at this historic temple."*

## SHORT NOTES

Every month, there are auspicious days according to the Thithi or Natchathiram. Thithi is defined as the distance between the Sun and Moon which exist in 2 forms – Valarpirai (waxing moon) and Theypirai (waning moon). Sathurthi Thithi is considered sacred for the worship of Lord Ganesha and Sashti Thithi for the worship of Lord Kanthan.

Full moon days (Pournami) are considered auspicious for worship of Amman.

The Karthigai Natchathiram (astral) is also very sacred for Lord Kanthan.

# Sri Durgadevi Thevasthanam, Tellippalai, Jaffna

*Symbolic of the triumph of the good and the virtues over the evil and wicked*



## INTRODUCTION

Saint Thirumoolar, in his Thirumathiram revealed about 6,000 years ago, among other matters, that numerous universes are moving in the unthinkable **darkness** in the space which he called as SHAKTHI. This SHAKTHI according to him is the cause of the entire universe, and its matter. The SPACE he called as SHIVAM. The world famous scientist of the 20th century, Dr Albert Einstein also held the view that beyond this universe, there is unthinkable darkness consisting of trillions of Universe.

Indian writers on Hinduism have exhorted that

PARASAKTHI is Mother Goddess and the primordial energy. Without Parasakthi, even Her consort Lord SHIVA is inert. She is said to be Sarvamangala – the bestower of Buddi, Mukthi, Bakthi and Gnana.

Hindus all over enjoy the liberty of worshipping the deity of their choice. Years ago it was found that the majority of the Hindus opted to worship SHAKTHI in the name of Durga and Subramaniya, the second son of Shiva and Shakthi, by the popular name Muruga, the ever young Commander in Chief of the Gods in their eternal war against evil.

## DURGA AT TELLIPPALAI

The people in the north of Jaffna are proud to have the holy shrine of all powerful Mother Durga in their midst at Tellippalai. Tellippalai could be reached by taking the Jaffna-Kankesanthurai (KKS Rd) motor road. From Tellippalai going in the direction of KKS you would reach Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Kovil after a 3 km journey.

## THE ORIGIN OF TELLIPPALAI

It would be interesting to know how the name of the town 'Tellippalai' came into existence. According to the ancient history of Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple situated to the north of Tellippalai along the main road to Kankesanthurai, a princess named Maruthapuravikavalli who had a face resembling that of a horse, and said to be from the Chola dynasty of India, on the advice of a saint visited Naguleswaram in Keerimalai. Keerimalai is reputed for its bathing pond, and she bathed hopefully without any fuss.

After the bath, as she emerged out of the pond her face transformed into that of a beautiful maiden. After this happy event, she is said to have stayed in a nearby village called 'Thalli Palli'. In Tamil, 'Thalli' means a young lady and 'Palli' means a hamlet. The combination of these two words reading 'Thalli Palli' had during the passage of time got mutilated into the present 'Tellippalai'.

## THE ORIGIN OF DURGA TEMPLE

The origin of this temple dates back to the year 1750 when one Mr Kathirgamar, who hailed from a respectable Hindu family set off on a pilgrimage to India. He spent 10 years in the holy city of Kasi (Varanasi) and transformed himself into a true devotee of Durga Devi. It is said that out of all the 64 Sakthi temples in India, the Swappaneswary shrine in Varanasi is regarded as one of paramount power.

It is believed that Mr. Kathirgamar would have received the blessings from the Goddess Swappaneswary. In about the year 1760, Mr. Kathirgamar returned to his homeland carrying with him two very important items of religious value – Yanthiram (a chanted mystical chart in

metal) and Kendi (an ewer – a large wide mouthed pitcher of bronze).

He was on his journey back to his home in northern Tellippalai. He felt tired and exhausted after the tedious journey home and was almost close to his home when he decided to rest for a while under a tree and soon fell asleep. There was a strange voice in a commanding tone telling him to install the yanthiram on that spot. Mr. Kathirgamar then sensing it as an act of God and in obedience to the command deposited the yanthiram at that spot and constructed a shelter. Subsequently, a priest was engaged to perform the regular pujas. Today Sri Durgadevi Devasthanam of Tellippalai stands majestically on the very same place where the late Mr. Kathirgamar established a shrine at Ulugodai Village by installing the yanthiram he brought from India two and a half centuries ago.

## THE TEMPLE

The temple building which stands today about 300 feet behind a huge architecturally designed arched entrance on to the western side of the Jaffna-Kankesanthurai motor road at Tellippalai, has a 5-tiered Raja Gopuram towering to a height of 63 feet. The Gopuram based on an eastern architectural design has nichings of numerous statues of varied sizes and hues depicting puranic stories, artistically painted with dazzling colours standing in front, flanked by shady trees and palmyrah palms in clusters.

The temple has a beautiful tank called 'Durga Pushkaranee' located to the north eastern direction of the temple. The tank with a depth of 30 feet below the ground level is square shaped with stone steps tapering downwards symmetrically. The temple has a 24 feet tall sacred flag mast erected in front of the altar about 32 feet away, inside the Temple.

A 27 inch high idol of the presiding deity – Sri Durgadevi stands on a two feet high pedestal, and is immanent with Shakthi. It is now the highly venerated cynosure of all eyes of those visiting the temple.

Other important deities enshrined in the kingdom of Sri Durgadevi Devasthanam are:

- Vinayagar
- Gajalakshmy
- Balasubramaniyar
- Nagathambiran
- Vairavar
- Sandeswarar

The temple also has a 36 feet tall massive wooden chariot of octagon-base design.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

The daily pujas of the temple are carried out four times according to the scheduled times as follows:

- 7.00am
- 11.00am
- 4.00pm
- 5.30pm

### Major Festivals

The annual high festival of Sri Durgadevi running into 12 days takes place during the month of August every year. The ceremony on the 1st day of the 12-day festival starts with a flag hoisting done on the 24 feet flag mast (Kodimaram).

On the second last day of the festival i.e on the 11th day, the car festival takes place where the chariot with Sri Durgadevi adorned, is taken circumambulating the outer perimeter of the temple. The car festival symbolizes the destruction of all evils, to pave the way for peace and prosperity. On the last day i.e. on the 12th day, the water cutting festival (Theertham) takes place at the temple tank-Durga Pushkaranee. During the 12 days of festival mid-day meals are provided by the temple – thanks to the generous sponsors.

## THE MANAGEMENT OF THE TEMPLE COMPLEX

Sri Durgadevi Devasthanam, Tellippalai is being managed with constituents of the 'Board of Trustees' and the 'Board of Management'.

The late 'Sivathamil Selvi' Dr (Miss) Thangammah Appacuddy JP was the President of the Devasthanam since 1977 until her demise recently. She was a self-disciplined, devoted, dedicated and compassionate lady of high rectitude, possessing a great treasure of knowledge in Tamil language culture, heritage philosophy etc. During the tenure of her service as President, she had rendered yeoman service.

In fact, she was responsible for the superb management of the Durgapuram temple complex, comprising Sri Durgadevi Temple, office block, living quarters, wedding hall, dining hall, cultural hall, refugee hall, 'Mahalir Illam' with more than 60 children, women's home, large library, printing press (at Chunnakam), and Mani Mandapam (at Nallur, Jaffna) with a total staff of fifty six to perform various duties. During the 40 years of her lecturing mission, she had delivered thousands of lectures and she was conferred with seven honorary titles.

The seven titular awards are:

1. Chenchot Chemmai (Madurai Aadheenam)
2. Sivathamil Selvi (Eelathu Chidamparam Karainagar),
3. Thiruvacakondal (Malaysia),
4. Sivagnana Vithakar (All Ceylon Hindu Federation Colombo),
5. Thurka Thuranthari (Sri Durgadevi Devasthanam Tellippalai),
6. Kalasoori (Govt of Sri Lanka) and
7. Doctor (University of Jaffna).

## THE LINK WITH MAVIDDAPURAM KANDASWAMY TEMPLE

According to history a very close and cordial relationship has been existing from ancient days between Durgadevi Devasthanam, Tellippalai and

Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple.

The Maha Kumba Abishegam of Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple, after the sacred reconstruction, was held in the year 1815. Subsequently in the year 1820, Durgadevi Temple of Tellippalai celebrated Maha Kumba Abishegam after major renovations. Perhaps for the first time on the Vijayathasami day in September 1829, the processional deity of Maviddapuram, Lord Murugan, was taken in procession to Tellippalai Durgadevi Temple for the traditional "Vanni Valzhaiveddu" ceremony in which a plantain tree erected for that occasion in the frontage of Durgadevi Temple, was slashed with a sword by the High Priest of Maviddapuram temple. This event symbolises triumph of the good and noble over the evil. From that day onwards, this meaningful festival had been celebrated with pomp and pagentary regularly up to the year 1990.

It is a misfortune that this magnificent annual event between these two famous shrines could not be celebrated after 1990 owing to the prolonging war and military operations in this part of the country.

## CONCLUSION

In the annals of Sri Durgadevi Devasthanam there have been several happenings and episodes. Perhaps it is appropriate to state an episode which could be attributed to divine intervention.

It was 4th March 1985. A group of gangsters

with arms, forcibly entered the temple after tying up the security officer. The group hauled up all items of gold, jewellery and other valuables and vanished.

The following day, the Jaffna Police and others were informed. Within a couple of days, the news of the burglary, was the talk of the town and had reached nationwide. Prayer meetings with the public were held in the temple. Sivathamil Selvi offered penitent prayers, in praise and verses to the Mother Goddess. Days passed, weeks passed, months passed and even a year passed by, but nothing beneficial was heard or seen. Thus, it was a thing of the past and the incident went into oblivion.

It was a Friday (full moon day) and on the morning of 23rd May 1986, an ardent devotee of the temple saw a bulky (fertilizer) bag lying outside the southern entrance of the temple. Fearing to go near, he informed the security officer and the management. Within minutes the temple staff along with many devotees arrived at the place. After taking precautionary measures, the bag was slowly opened. What a big surprise! The entire booty of jewellery and all other valuables that were stolen from the temple about 14 months ago were all there undamaged. The much delighted President of the temple along with several others worshipped the all powerful Durga Ambal, praising Her Grace and expressed the gratitude for Her miraculous act.



Theerta Tank - Durga Pushkaranee



# Naga Pooshani Ambal Temple, Nainativu

*A revered site for the worship of Ambal*

## INTRODUCTION

Nainativu is one of the seven islands of northern coast of Sri Lanka. It is often referred to as Nagadeepa. Foremost in the Nainativu is the Nagammal temple. Evidence that this 4 square mile islet had once been a sea-port frequented by ships, was gleaned from a 12th century stone inscription discovered at this site recently

Its origin is associated with the Naga era in Ceylon and the statue of Naga deity placed in the sanctum is said to be very very ancient. It is now a revered site for the worship of Naga Pooshani Ambal and is visited by thousands of pilgrims who seek the blessings of Ambal Devi for the well-being of their new born babies.

## LOCATION

The island of Nainativu is located in south westerly direction from Jaffna town and is 35 km from town. The island is about 4 km in length and about 1.2 km in width with 8 km of coastline. The island is surrounded on three sides by the islands of Analativu to the north, Neduntivu in the south, and to the east is Pungudutivu. To the west of the island is the vast expanse of sea of Indian Ocean.

Through passage of time, the following enhanced facilities were made available:

- Garbagraham
- Arthamandapam
- Sthamba Mandapam
- Kalayana Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam
- Vahanasalai
- Bell Tower
- Madapalli
- Office



Temples were built for the following:

- Pillaiyar
- Vairavar
- Abirami Pattar
- Subramaniam
- Samaya Kuravars

The south entrance gopuram was built in 1983.

The recently built Rajagopuram (east entrance) which is 108 feet in height with nine tiers stands majestically welcoming the devotees as soon as they disembark from the ferry. The most recent Maha Kumba Abishegam was held on 29th January

2012. Previous Maha Kumba Abishegams were held in 1951, 1963, 1983, and 1998.

## TEMPLE

It is said that originally a temple was built there at this Naga Shrine by a trader who received Ambal's Grace, when passing by in the sea.

When the temple structure suffered demolition in the 16th century by foreign invaders, it is said that the Nagapooshani Ambal statue was kept hidden in a tree.

It is on record that one Ramalingar Ramachandirar rebuilt the temple in 1788. It has since been renovated and a Gopuram added in 1935 at the east entrance.

## Deities

Presiding deity:

- Nagapooshani Ambal (Naini Ambal Utsava Moortham is Manonmoney Ambal)

Other deities:

- Vinayagar
- Subramaniyar
- Navagrahas
- Suriar
- Santhirar
- Sri Buvaneswari Ambal
- Vairavar
- Sandekeswary
- Santhaanagopalar
- Icons of 63 Samaya Kuravars



## Theertham

The temple's sacred theertham is Sithamirtha Pushkarani.

## Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The temple's sacred tree is the Vanni tree.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held four times daily.

### Festivals

Mahotsavam, a 15-day festival held in the month of Aani (June/July). Theertham is held on Aani Pooranai day.

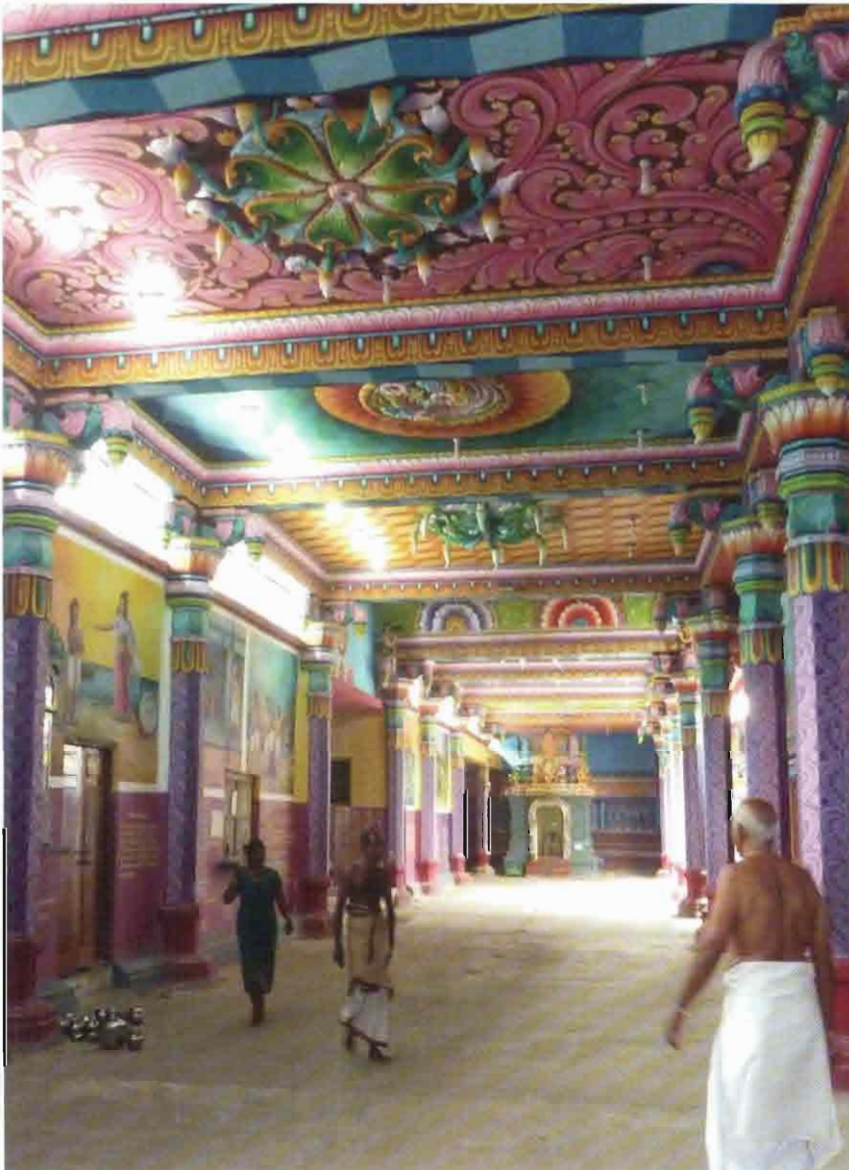
Other festivals held annually are as follows:

- Tamil New Year
- Aani Uthiram
- Aadipuram
- Aavani Moolam
- Navarathiri
- Kantha Sashti
- Ippasi Velli
- Pillaiyar Kathai
- Kartigai Theeba Vizha
- Thiruvembavai
- Thaipusam
- Thai Amavasai
- Maasi Magam
- Sivarathiri
- Panguni Uthiram

## CONCLUSION

It is said that this Ambal is the most revered shrine. Those who have nagathosham would visit this temple to do their penance and seek blessings of Ambal. The temple is elevated with triple adjunct of Moorthy, sthalam and theertham.

Several publications have been made on the subject of this revered temple by Mudaliar Kula



Sabanathan and others.

Master Thambu (Upathiyayar – 1865 to 1943) has composed the following two verses in Tamil about the Ambal and the celebrated temple.

- Nayinai Nagadeepa Pathikam
- Nayinai Naga Pooshani Erattaimani Malar

It is said that there a number of miracles associated with this revered Ambal. The temple management has provided jetty facilities for the convenience and safety of the pilgrims, who come there by boat and other vessels which is the only mode of transport currently available to go to the island. There are 52 Shakti Peethas popularly known or 108 to some tradition. It is believed that Goddess Sakthi made Her divine presence in these places. In this respect, Naga Pooshani Ambal, Nainativu, Sri Lanka has been listed as the 48th of the Shakti Peedhas.

Top left: sculptural works depicting a puranic scene. Left: corridor leading to the Ganesha temple.

# Sivakami Amman Temple, Inuvil, Jaffna

*Worshipped by the Tamil Kings of Jaffna Kingdom*

## INTRODUCTION

The Sivakami Amman Temple of Inuvil was established in the 13th century. Its original name was Pechchiamman.

It is said that Vijayakalinga Ariya Chakravathy had ascended the throne in 1242 and in around 1248, had constructed the Jaffna city, where he established his new capital.

Vijayakalinga was a devoted Saivite who had built many temples in the Jaffna city and in his territory. In all, probably the Sivakami Amman Temple of Inuvil was one of the temples built during his era.

The temple, worshipped by various Tamil kings in the 13th and 15th century during their respective rules, was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1621 when they invaded Jaffna. However, the temple was re-built during the Dutch rule and it became functional for devotees to continue to worship.

King Pararajasekaran ruled Jaffna from Inuvil and Sivakami Amman Temple is one of the temples located in Inuvil. King Parajasekaran and other Tamil Kings who ruled Jaffna gave importance to Tamil language and Saiva religion.



Jaffna was divided into twelve divisions to facilitate effective administration and good governance. A Chieftain was appointed to head each division. Innaiyur (Inuvil) was one of such division which was headed by one Mr. Peraayiramudaiyan of Thirukovilur. He was an ardent devotee of this temple. He brought in the Sivakami Amman statue for worship. He named the temple site as 'Chidambara Valavu'. Mr. Peraayiramudaiyan was succeeded by Mr Kalingarayan as Chief who would go to Chidambara Valavu in the morning to worship before proceeding with his daily routines. Upon his death, his son Kailayanathan administered the Inuvil division of Jaffna Kingdom. It was the practice during his time, that the chariot carrying Sivakami Amman during the 'oorvalam' (tour) would first stop by Mr. Kailayanathan's residence before continuing the oorvalam.

### LOCATION

The temple is located along Inuvil Street, Kondavil North. It is about 6km from Jaffna Town going along Jaffna-Kakesanthurai (K.K.S) road. The Sivakami Amman Temple is at the cross roads leading to various directions linking Inuvil.

### THE TEMPLE

In 1962, temple thiruppani works commenced and Maha Kumba Abishegam was held in the year 1965 on the 17th day (Thursday) of the Tamil month of Aani.

In 1969, further works commenced to upgrade the temple and accordingly the Bell Tower, Palipeedam, Vasantha Mandapam were added and the Vairavar temple renovated. In 1974, a 5-tiered Rajagopuram was built. The works were completed and the Kumba Abishegam was held on 3rd June 1976. Flag hoisting/Utsavam commenced and concluded on 11th June 1976 with theerthotsavam.

The inner prakaram (courtyard) houses the deities, and in the outer courtyard, is the Thirumandapam Sinnathamby Pulavar Hall. Surrounding the temple on the west side street is Vairavar and Bhathira Kali Temples. The east of the temple is Karaikal Sivan Temple which has links to the Chola Dynasty.

### The Deities

Presiding deity:

- Sivakami Ambal

Other deities:

- Vinayagar
- Murugan
- Vairavar
- Nadarajar
- Bhathirkaliamman
- Karaikal Sivan

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree of Sivakami Amman Temple is the Aalai and Arasu trees standing together in front of the temple which reminds us of Sakthi and Sivan.

### DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

#### Daily Pujas

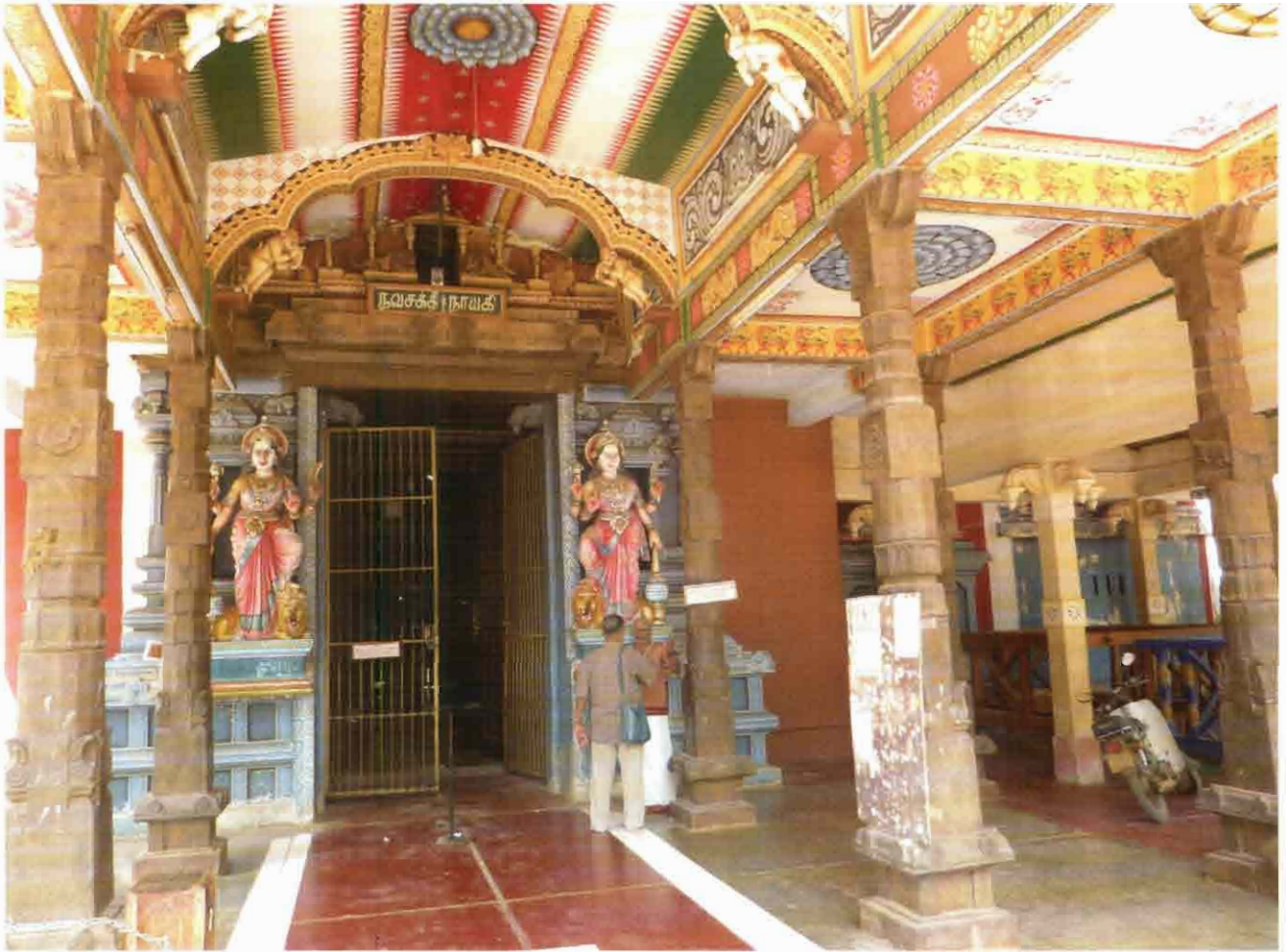
Pujas are held three times a day.

#### Major Festivals

The annual Mahotsavam is a 12-day festival held during the month of Panguni. The festival begins with a flag raising ceremony. On the 9th day, the utsava deities of Pillaiyar, Murugan and Ambal are taken out in procession around the temple mounted on the horse vahanam. On the 10th day the deity is taken around in procession in Sapparam (chariot). On the 11th day is Chariot festival. The Theerthotsavam (theertham festival) and the Poongavanam festivals are held on the 12th day.

Other festivals celebrated annually are:

- Aadipuram
- Navarathiri (9 days which includes Vijayathasami, Maanambu followed by Navasakthi Archanai Yagam)
- Kanthashasti (6 days)
- Thiruvembavai (10 days)



Above: Inside the Sivakami Amman Temple – a view from the main entrance. Below: The presiding deity Sivakami Amman

## CONCLUSION

The temple Kumba Abishegams was held in 1947, 1960 and 1979 and the Maha Kumba Abishegam was held in 1999 after all necessary upgrading works from Garbagraham to Rajagopuram were completed.

The Tamil scholar, well-famed Sinnathamby Pulavar who was serving the Dutch Government was an ardent devotee of Sivakami Amman. He was imprisoned by the Dutch at one time but with Divine intervention he was released. The sthala history of this temple is found in the 'Yalpana Vaipava Malai'. The highly venerated Sivakami Amman reins from Inuvil safeguarding Her devotees of Inuvil and its surrounding areas.



# Arulmigu Sri Veeramakali Amman Kovil, Nallur, Jaffna

*Devotees seek the Her blessings before embarking on risky operations*

## INTRODUCTION

Vijayakalinga, the first Ariya Chakravathy King of Jaffna, founded this temple. The following are the other temples he built in each of the four directions around the city of Nallur:

- North – Saddamathar Temple (Nalai Nathar)
- East – Veyilukantha Pillayar
- South – Kailaya Nathar Temple
- West – Veeramakali Amman Temple

Kanagasooriyan who reigned for a long period under the throne name of Pararajasekaran, King of Jaffna, is also associated with these four temples.

Kali Amman's blessings for success are especially invoked by many before they embark on dangerous or risky missions. Here it is said that the soldiers would assemble and take their oath of fidelity and have their swords blessed by Kali Devi, before they go to the battlefield. Her blessings are auspicious, even today, for use of all tools and implements by the artisans.

The temple was the scene of an unfortunate historical incident in the 16th century. Sankili was King of Jaffna, reigning under the throne name of



Segarajasekaran from 1519–1565. At a time when he was hard-pressed by the Portuguese there came to his aid Vidiya Bandara, a General who had fallen out with the Portuguese. An agreement soon reached between Sankili and Vidiya Bandara against the Portuguese, their common enemy and to vouchsafe their contract, they assembled before the Veeramakali Amman temple to swear their oath of fidelity; unfortunately an explosion that had taken place at a neighbouring ammunition store caused a commotion in which Vidiya Bandara was killed. Sankili very much regretted this incident and it is said that he erected the Pootharayar Temple at Nallur as expiation, in memory of his friend.

The location was also the battlefield, in the war between Sankili and the invading Portuguese, according to the Yalpana Vaipava Malai. In the battle that took place in 1560, Sankili was victorious. He however lost later, and was captured.

The temple was destroyed by the invaders, in the year 1621 along with other temples. The present temple was built when Hinduism was resuscitated during the Arumuga Navalar era (19th century) near the site of the original temple. It is said that King Sankili's Sword is preserved to this day in a place of honour in this present temple.

## LOCATION

Located at No. 140 Point Pedro Road Nallur West, Vannarpannai Jaffna, the temple is hardly a mile from Jaffna and is within the city limits.

## THE TEMPLE

The temple is sited in the northerly direction. The temple has a 5-tiered Rajagopuram with a height of 68 feet and has two bell towers.

## Mandapams

The temple has six Mandapams as follows:

- Arthamandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Stamba Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam

- Tharisana/Nirtha Mandapam
- Mani Mandapam

## Inner Court

The inner court of the temple houses the following:

Presiding deity:

- Veeramakali (original shrine)

Other deities:

- Vinayagar
- Subramaniyar
- Sivalingam
- Amman
- Sanneeswarar
- Nagathambiran
- Saraswathy
- Sandeswarar
- Mahalatchumy
- Durga

## The Outer Court

The outer court has the following with separate temple for each of the shrine:

- Santhaana Gopalar
- Vairavar

It is said that the Eluntharuly Ambal Vighram (utsava moorthy) was worshipped by King Sankili. Traditionally he places his weapons for worship before proceeding to the battlefield.

## Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

Maruthamaram (Termanalia Alala).

## Chariot (Ther)

The Chithra ther (chariot) named Veeramakali Amman Ther, was made in 1941. Surrounding the temple is the car street where fresh water well is located and the ther run-path is lined with trees – Marutha maram (Termanalia Alala) and Arasa maram (Ficus religiosa).

## Theertha Tank

The theertha tank, Kailika Theertha Pushkarani, is located on the west court.





Steps leading to the kolam

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held three times a day, at 7.00am, 12.00 noon and 5.00pm.

### Major Festivals

Mahotsava festival which was originally an 18-day celebration now last for 25 days finishing with the full moon day in June and Kali Devi makes Her ceremonial procession around Nallur. During the procession (Oorvalam) residents pay homage by receiving Her with the traditional 'mandahapady' at their entrances of their respective homes which provides a feeling of security to the Nallur folks. Other festivals include Thai Amavasai (10 days) and Navarathiri.

## CONCLUSION

The present form of Hindu religion embodies within itself six divisions of worship namely Ganapathy, Saiva, Vaishnava, Saktha, Kaumara and Sowra. Deities representing these six divisions of the Hindu religion and their abodes are called temples which are found in Sri Lanka. The Veeramakali Amman temple Nallur attracts devotees of Saktha worship. Sakthi is symbolic of energy or active power. The devotees in the Nallur city feel secure with presence of the revered temple within their vicinity.

# Vannai Sri Vengkatesa Varatharaja Perumal Thevasthanam Jaffna

*The Thirupathi of Eelam*

## INTRODUCTION

The ancient and famous Varatharaja Vengkatesa Perumal Kovil is said to be about 600 years old and Vaishnava worship is said to have originally commenced under a tree and continued thereafter. The tree being only a tree had survived the devastation done to places of worship during the Portuguese and Dutch rule. Among the Ariya Chakravathy Kings who ruled the kingdom of Jaffna for 3 centuries, (from the 13th–16th) there was Kuna Pooshana Singhai Ariyan who reigned as Ariya Chakravathy King Segarajasekaran IV. Kuna Pooshanan was a very successful ruler and a pious king. He was very much interested in the development of his little kingdom. For this purpose, he invited settlers specially proficient in fine weaving, from Andra Nad, Karaikal and Kancheepuram in South India. The settlers belong to Padma Sali Chetty class. Among them there was a devout religious man who assisted the settlers in their customary Vaishnava form of worship.



Santhanathan Thottam, Vannaan Thottam. Some of the landmarks, (roads) include Kaithady, Clock Tower Road, Clock Tower Lane, Yaarl Road and Paruthithurai Road.

## LOCATION

The temple is situated in the heart of Jaffna town, (Vaniampathy) with vast acreages of land. It is located within an area surrounded on the east by Paanan Kaadu Santhanathan Thottam, on the south by Saruvichikaadu Thadaan-thurai, on the west by Adiyaarku Nallaan Varambu and on the north

## THE TEMPLE

The temple which started in a small way had a significant and a remarkable growth after the Dutch rule. Originally, a small Vighram of Sri Vengkatesar was the Moola Moorthy. The most recent Maha Kumba Abishegam held on 10th July 2003 also saw the second Rajagopuram which was commissioned

on the Maha Kumba Abishegam day.

The details of the two Rajagopurams are as follows:

### First Rajagopuram

A 7-tiered gopuram which was started in 1973 and was completed in 1978 concluded with a Maha Kumba Abishegam in the same year. It is said that the first Rajagopuram located at the main entrance to the temple is the tallest Gopuram in Sri Lanka.

### Second Rajagopuram

A 5-tiered Rajagopuram which was started on 10th June 1998 was commissioned on 10th July 2003 (Maha Kumba Abishegam). It faces the southerly direction at the entrance to Sri Renganather Sannithi.

The features and facilities of the temple are as follows:

IDOL/ ICON	LOCATION
Sri Renganathar	Snapana Mandapam
Sri Devi / Boomi Devi with Sri Renganathaswamy and Adhishesha	Maha Mandapam
Sri Vigneswarer Ramanujam Achariar	
Garuda Kodisthambam (Flag Staff) Palipeedam (Sacrificial alter) Navagrahas (Nine planets)	Nirtha Mandapam

The temple area comprises of two prakarams i.e. thoolam (inner) and sookuman (outer). The following are located in the inner prakaram i.e. courtyard of the temple:

- Sri Mahaletchumy Sannithi
- Sthala Vriksha (sacred tree)
- Sri Santhaana Gopalar Sannithi
- Sri Rama Seetha Lechumanan Aangeneyar

Sannithi

- Sri Andal Sannithi
- Sri Aangeneyar
- Sri Renganathar
- Bell tower

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree is the Jack tree (Artocarpus intergrifolia)

### Theertham

Santhira Pushkarani

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held six times as follows:

- Ushatkalam
- Kaalaisanthi
- Uchchikalam
- Sayaratchai
- Erandaamkalam
- Arthajamam

### Major Festivals

The Bramotsava festivals of this ancient temple have been carried out annually since 1878 and are held in the month of Purataasi (September/October). It is a 10-day festival with flag hoisting ceremony and on the 9th day is Rathotsavam (car run festival) followed by theerthotsavam (water cutting festival).

Other festivals include Ekathasi which occurs twice a month, Thai ponggal, Sri Rama Navami thinam, Varalakshmi Viratham (fast) etc.

## CONCLUSION

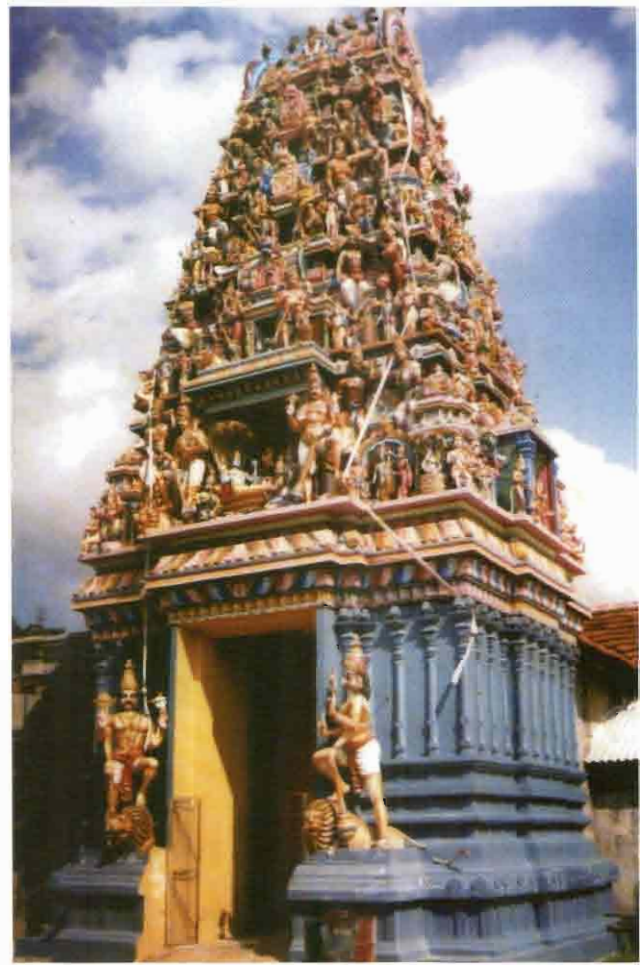
The 600 years old Vannai Sri Vengkatesa Varatharaja Perumal was built to provide facilities for Vaishnava worship for the migrant population who came from India to work in the weaving industry.

Through the passage of time the temple has acquired vast area of land and property which

yields good rental income and the devotee merchants have always responded generously with donation which resulted in the rapid growth of this temple. Thus the temple could boast of a 7-tiered Rajagopuram which is said to be the tallest Gopuram at that prevalent time in Sri Lanka. Comprehensive facilities have been provided to accommodate the needs of the devotees. The temple carries the name of **'Thirupathi Of Eelam'** a befitting alternative name for this historic temple.



Sri Seetha, Sri Rama and Sri Laxmana



Sri Renganathar Gopuram

# Konaaseema Narasingha Vairavar Aalayam, Mahathanai, Tellippalai Jaffna

*The Guardian of the village of Mahathanai*

## INTRODUCTION

In the Sivapuram 'Vairavar' has been termed as incarnation of Lord Siva and Vairavar is also known as 'Aghora Moortham'. This form of Moortham is also called 'Vaduha Nather' and 'Vadukesar'.

In Kanthapuram Lord Vairavar is mentioned as 'Vaduka Vannal' (Vadukat Vannal). Lord Vairavar can be appeased easily through worship. He is worshipped in three characters i.e. Sattvic (pious), Rajas (worshipped), and Tamas (destructive).

In Jaffna Peninsula of Sri Lanka most of the villages have Vairavar Temples and one such temple is the Konaaseema Narasingha Vairavar temple of Mahathanai, Tellippalai. The village of Mahathanai is abundant with Saiva population who are ardent devotees of Lord Narasingha Vairavar. He reins the village safeguarding the villagers and giving boons to ardent devotees.

It is said that the Vairavar temple was established more than 100 years ago by a Saiva devotee of Mahathanai named Narasingha Mudhaliar. It was started with a Trident (symbolic of Lord Vairavar) under a Elluppai Tree (*Bassia longi Folia*) in a compound called Konmaseema and was worshipped by the local population of about thirty families in the village of Mahathanai.

In the early days, it was the practice for the expectant mothers of this village to break coconut at this temple and pray for normal delivery of the baby. During the early days the villagers do not



go to hospital for maternity cases. Thus delivery of baby is always at home. If the expectant mother experiences difficulty or slowed down in delivery then a second coconut is broken at the south western corner of this temple.

Through passage of time with improved rural medical and health care, villagers began to seek medical attention at the Government hospitals. Therefore the practice of delivery of babies at home gradually ceased and the practice of breaking coconuts, at this temple also ceased. Nevertheless they pray to Lord Vairavar for safe delivery.

## LOCATION

Going along the Jaffna-Kangkesanthurai Road (KKS) near Tellippalai one would pass Durga Devi Temple on the left and proceeding onwards a few metres,

one would see a lane on the left. Turning left into the lane and continue about 500 metres one would reach the Vairavar Temple of Mahathanai located in the temple compound of Konaaseema. On the west, (behind the temple) is vast expanse of farm field where most of the villagers are engaged in farming activities for their livelihood. Immediately behind the temple within the temple compound is the Eluppai tree which is tall and imposing and spreading out its deciduous branches providing shade. The temple generally is surrounded by lush green trees such as Margosa, Jack and coconut trees.

Other surrounding temples around Tellippalai area are:

- Kasi Vinayagar Temple
- Durga Devi Temple
- Kurukkal Kinathadi
- Varthalam Pillaiyar Temple
- Kumbavala Pillaiyar Temple
- Thotharai Amman Temple
- Gurunathaswamy Temple

## HISTORY

Narasingha Mudhaliar, the founder of this Vairavar temple donated the property at Konaaseema together with the temple, to a Brahmin devotee named Siva Sri E. Muthukumara Swamigal who at that prevalent time served as a poosahar of Kasi Vinayagar Temple. He was a headmaster of a school named Kanagasabai Vidyasalai. It is said that he accepted the donated property at Konaaseema and became the, trustee and poosahar of Nararasingha Vairavar Temple of Mahathanai. During the tenure of his service to this temple, it is said that he did some improvements to the temple and held its Maha Kumba Abishegam.

Upon his demise, his son Siva Sri Sivakadachcha Kurukkal took over the responsibilities as poosahar and trustee of both Kasi Vinayagar and Vairavar temples. In the early 1940's, he formed the 'Paalar Gnanothaya Sabai' at the Kasi Vinayagar Temple and organized religious classes for youths who are mostly students of Mahajana College. Examinations were held and prize – giving was an annual event.

He made lots of improvements to the Narasingha

Vairavar Temple with the help of the villagers. Improvements included the construction of Aathimoolam and Artha Mandapam and under his trusteeship the second Kumba Abishegam was held on 7th April 1947. The Maha Kumba Abishegam ceremony was headed by Siva Sri Murugiah of Oorelu.

Later through fund raising, the Maha Mandapam and Tharisana Mandapam were built. In 1981, the Trident in the Moolasthanam was replaced with granite icon of Vairavar.

In 1983, a committee was formed to raise funds to upgrade the temple according to Aagamic principles. Accordingly, they collected sufficient funds and built separate shrines for Vinayagar, Murugan and Nagathambiran.

The third Maha Kumba Abishegam was held on 9th June 1985. In the following year, the fifth Mandapam – the Sthamba Mandapam was built in 1987.

The bell tower was also upgraded and the Kumba Abishegam for the bell tower was held accordingly.

In the years 1990 to 1992 owing to the internal strife, the temple committee was not able to function properly. In 1997, the situation was back to normal. Under a new committee the fourth Maha Kumba Abishegam was held in 1999.

The fifth and most recent Maha Kumba Abishegam was held on 31st August 2011. It was conducted by Siva Sri Brahnatharthihara Kurukkal and Siva Sri T. Mahatheva Kurukkal.

## TEMPLE

The temple has now the following mandapams and associated facilities:

- Aathimoolam (moolasthanam)
- Arthamandapam
- Snapana mandapam
- Tharisana mandapam
- Stamba mandapam
- Bell tower
- Madappali
- Ponggal square
- Vahanasalai

## Deities

Presiding deity:

- Narasingha Vairavar (A granite icon Vairavar which replaced the Trident in 1981)

Other deities:

- Vinayagar sited on the left side in the Snapana Mandapam (each has a separate Sannithi)
- Murugan sited on the right side
- Nagathambiran sited on the north eastern side of Maha Mandapam

## Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree of this temple is Eluppai tree – the long leaved bassia tree (*Bassia long folia*). The lofty tree, spreading its branches stands majestically within the temple precinct.



Narasingha Vairavar bell tower

## PRIESTS

The priests and trustees of this temple are of three generations serving a total period of more than 100 years. Siva Sri Muthukumara Swamigal is the first priest who served the temple up to early 1940's and did the first Maha Kumba Abishegam for the temple. Upon his demise, his son Siva Sri Sivakadachcha Kurukkal took over from his father and held the second Maha Kumba Abishegam in 1947 and continued to serve this temple until his demise in 1970.

Siva Sri Sivakadachcha Kurukkal was succeeded by his only son Siva Sri Kanesalinga Kurukkal who served a total of about 50 years both as assistant to his father and as the trustee and priest. Siva Sri Kanesalinga Kurukkal held the third Maha Kumba Abishegam in 1985 and the fourth Maha Kumba Abishegam in 1999. All these priests of this three generations were also serving in the Kasi Vinayagar Temple simultaneously during the same period of their service with the Vairavar Temple.

Brahma Sri S. Rajendra Sharma was appointed as poosahar of the Narasingha Vairavar Temple. He carried out his duties serving Lord Vairavar with dedication and commitment with regular Nirtha Naimithiya rituals.

In November 2005, the trustee Siva Sri Kanesalinga owing to his inability to continue his service and owing to the fact that none of his family was willing to come forward to take up the trusteeship, informed the temple management of his intention to relinquish his trusteeship and accordingly he informed the temple management in writing in November 2005. In 2007, Siva Sri Kanesalinga passed away after serving the Vairavar Temple as a Trustee and poosahar for about 37 years.

The temple management took the necessary action to register the temple with the Ministry of Hindu Culture and Religion. The temple was mandated to be managed under the Temple Management Committee.

## MAJOR FESTIVALS

The annual Mahotsava festival is the 12-day Alankara Utsavam which is usually held in 31st August. The ceremonies for the first 11 days include Abishegam special pooja and Veethivalam (daily taken out in procession). On the 12th day, the ceremony starts with Sanga Abishegam and Thiru Oonjal.

Other festivals celebrated by this temple annually are as follows:

- Thai Ponggal
- Thaipooosam
- Maha Sivarathiri
- Panguni Uthiram
- Tamil New Year
- Chithira Pournami
- Aadi Puram
- Vaikasi Visagam
- Aippasi Parrani
- Deepavali
- Aippasi Last Friday
- Navarathiri
- Karthigai Villaku
- Thiruvembavai

The Vairavar Temple has a close link with Kasi Vinayagar Temple and this link was brought about by three generations of priests who served both temples. On the Vijayathasami day of Navarathiri which involves the cutting of Vanni (banana) tree, the Vairavar Temple in Mahathanai is graced by Lord Kasi Vinayagar during His tour of Oorvalam.

## CONCLUSION

It is the firm belief of the Saiva devotees of Mahathanai that the 100 years old Lord Narasingha Vairavar is full of veneration and is the giver of boons and guardian of the villagers. It is the fervent hope of the temple management that the devotees both from within and abroad would respond spontaneously with generous donations in order to upgrade and complement the existing temple facilities. It is the aspiration of the temple committee that the under mentioned projects become a reality:

- Vasantha Mandapam
- Sannithi for Sandeeswarar
- A Concrete Perimeter Wall
- Thirumanjana Kinaru (Sacred well)

There was indeed a spontaneous response from devotees and well wishers for the recent Maha Kumba Abishegam which was successfully held on 31st August 2011 and the donations amounted to Rps 1,011,354/-.

Donations can be forwarded to any of the under mentioned bank:

Bank A/C :

Name: Narasingha Vairavar Temple  
Commercial Bank, Chunnakam  
-8107019159

OR

National Savings Bank Chunnakam  
-100720182141

## Footnote:

The writer is the great grandson of the late Narasingha Mudhaliar.



# Inuvil Kandaswamy Temple

*A temple which organises competition on Saiva religious knowledge*



## INTRODUCTION

The Kandaswamy Temple of Inuvil is being managed by a temple committee which ensures that the temple rituals are performed in accordance to Saiva Aagamic principles. It also ensures that necessary facilities are available for the worship of Lord Kanthan.

A significant activity organized by this temple is the competition on Saiva religious knowledge, organized annually with due recognition given to the outstanding students.

## LOCATION

The Inuvil Kandaswamy Temple is located on Inuvil/ Manipay Road adjoining Sri Pararajasekara Pillaiyar temple.

## TEMPLE

The temple has a 3-tiered Rajagopuram with two courts (inner and outer courts) with the following Mandapams:

- Shanmuga Mandapam
- Nadesar Mandapam

- Maha Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam
- Thevar Sabai

### Deities

Presiding deity:

- Originally 'Vel' now replaced with Valli-Theivayanai Sametha Subramaniam

Other deities:

- Pillaiyar temple
- Somaskanthar
- Santhaanagopalar
- Mahaletchumy
- Utsava Moorthys
- Navagrahas
- Nagathambiran
- Durga
- Manikootu Vairavar
- Surian
- Santhiran
- Santhiadi Vairavar
- Sandeswarar temple

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree is the Notchi tree.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held six times a day as follows:

5.30am	Ushatkalam
8.00am	Kaalaisanthi
12.00 noon	Uchchikalam
5.30pm	Sayaratchai
6.30pm	Palliyarai

### Major Festivals

The annual Mahotsava celebration goes on for 25 days, concluding with theertham on Aadi Amavasai. Other celebrations include Thirukalyanam and Poongavanam festivals.

## CONCLUSION

The manjam of this temple is recognized by the Indian Craftsmen as manjam of antiquity. Annual Kanthapuram reading is carried out. Competition is organized annually for students of religious knowledge and due recognition is given to the best students.

## SHORT NOTES

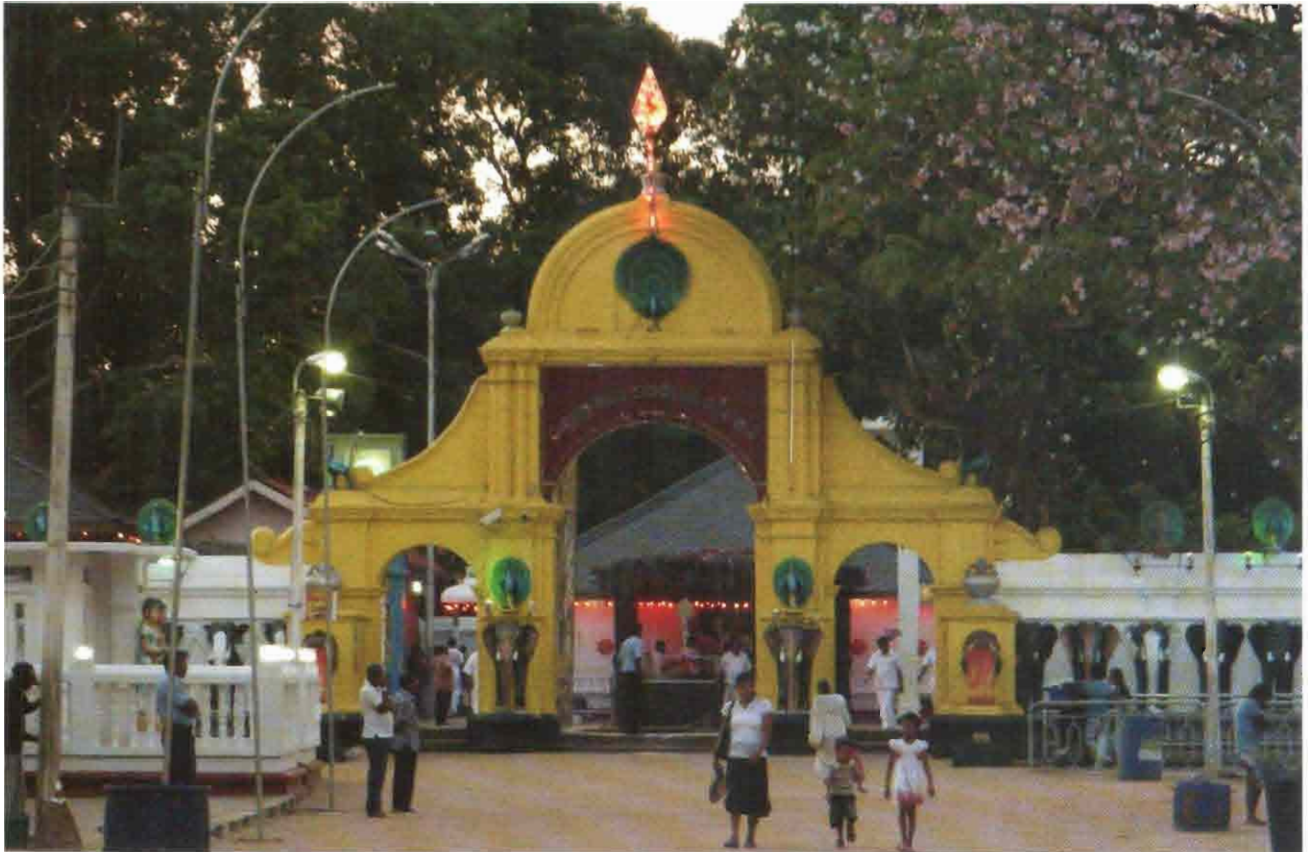
### KANTHA SASHTI FESTIVAL

Temples play a great role in helping man nurture and develop bakti or love towards God. Participation in the regular pujas and observation of fast helps one to discipline one's life. The most important and sacred fast for Lord Kanthan is the Kantha Sashti fast that falls in the month of Aippasi. It is observed for a period of six days signifying the battle between Lord Kanthan and Soorapadman.

During these days devotees observe strict fast and spend most of their time in a temple reciting the Kantha Sashti Kavasam. This is one of the grand festivals observed at Murugan temples. On the sixth day would be the battle.

## Kataragama

*One of the holiest place in Sri Lanka, where it is devoid of any religious and racial bias*



### INTRODUCTION

Kataragama is sacred to God Karthikeya, from whom it derived the name Karthikeya Grama (City of Karthikeya) and then came to be known as Kataragama. The Tamils who are the chief worshippers at this shrine, have given the Tamil name 'Kathirkamam' – a city of divine glory and love. God Karthikeya is called 'Kandaswamy' by the Tamils (Kanda the Tamil word for 'Skanda' in Sanskrit and the Sinhalese Kanda Kumara).

Kataragama is of dual importance. One reason being that; it is devoid of any religious and racial bias. Sri Lankans one and all flock to this historical site for pilgrimages. Secondly, it is a valuable

historical landmark which could be traced back to many centuries before Christ.

### LOCATION

Tissamaharama is a place located in the extreme south east of the island of Sri Lanka. About 12 miles from this place hidden in the jungle between hills lay the holy sanctuary of the God of Kataragama. The whole region around the holy place of God of Kataragama is called 'Deviange Kele' i.e. God's Jungle. A very special, solemn atmosphere lies over this sanctuary and the hymn "Vel, Vel, Vetrivel" is always uttered with devotion by devout Hindus.

Many kinds of roads lead to Kataragama, only two of which can be used by cars. One leads directly and the other by a large detour from Tissamaharama to the small and still famous jungle village. From here a jungle road leads northward to the town of Buttala, another eastward to Pottuvil, situated along the coast, a third eventually in a westward direction to Tanamalvila. The main road is the direct road from Tissamaharama which is 12 miles long. The majority of pilgrims use the main road to Kataragama.

### PURANIC AND LEGENDARY VERSION

The legend connected with Kataragama has been laid down in the epic heroic poem, Skanda Purana (Purana-legend) originally in Sanskrit. It goes back, as one would imagine to the 5th century before Christ, while the Tamil version is supposed to have originated in the 8th century. The centre of the legend is Skanda. The puranic legend narrates the story of Skanda emanating as six sparks – six lovely children, to be fondled by six Karthigai Maidens in the lake Saravana.

The six lovely children became a single being with six faces of exquisite beauty when Uma went towards them and gathered all six into Her arms, thus Skanda, the God of War was born.

He grew up and became an unusually handsome, strong and young man whom the Gods chose as their leader. He chose a thousand warriors from among them, who henceforth formed His retinue. Each was prodded with a lance with a flaming blade. He then went out with His army to defeat the Titans.

In this way, the lance became the symbol of God with which He is always represented or venerated in His name. Defeating the Titan asuras with His lance (Vel), Skanda, the Devas were free from threat. In gratitude of the victory over the asuras, Lord Indran gave his daughter Devai Yanai as His wife. Both of them went to Kanda Velpu and lived there together happily for a long time.

Further, according to the legend, Skanda falls in love with Valli Amma, a Vedda girl who was living in Parana, four miles off the present Kataragama. After marriage, the couple lived on a hilltop adjacent to Kataragama. All ended well. When His first

wife Devai Yanai emigrated to Ceylon and settled down in the present Kataragama, she succeeded in getting Her Husband and Valli Amma to settle down with Her in Kataragama. Subsequently years later, a sage from India, who was known as Muthu Linga Swamy, unable to persuade Lord Skanda to return, also continued to dwell at Kataragama. His, it is said, is the sacred Yantra or Tablet, the chief object of worship at Kataragama.

### TEMPLES

The temple buildings in Kataragama housing the shrines are generally small, plain buildings built of stones with no adornment or architectural wonders. However, the temple for Valli Amma is a simple wooden structure.

The holiest of all the temples is the Mahadevale or as it is also called MahaKovil. It is dedicated to the great deity and it holds within it the holy object, the yantra of the deity. This temple is the first that has to be visited by the pilgrims. It is the largest of the temples in Kataragama. There are no sculptural representations of the deity in any form inside the temple. A particularly holy object is the Kalana madima, a large arm-chair made out of clay, which stands on a platform. It is covered with a leopard skin and on it lie different ceremonial instruments. This was the arm-chair of Kalana Natha, the first priest of this temple.

There are two entrances to the temple. The main entrance faces the east as it is the case with many temples and the other is a small side entrance. There are three curtains, each of a different colour. Only the front one is visible. On this are represented the deity with His two Consorts and the peacock. These curtains correspond to the three spheres or the three aspects, which serve to demonstrate the volitions and actions of the deity.

Behind the curtains is the most sacred part which only the two highest priests, the kapuralas, are allowed to enter. Before doing so, they first have to wash their hands and feet and dress themselves in a clean white loin-cloth. In addition, they have to tie their mouths similarly with a clean white cloth, because the holy relic is kept in this room and must

never be soiled under any circumstances.

So great is the holiness of this temple that no kind of alteration is allowed to be carried out on the building unless the deity should order the highest priest in a dream to do so.

The following temples are located adjoining and around the Maha Kovil:

- Ganesha Temple
- Temple of Theivayanai - Amma
- Vishnu Temple
- Temple of Valli Amma
- Temple of the Goddess Kali
- Temple of Mutulinga Swami
- Temple of Patini Devi
- Temple of Mangara Deviyo
- Skanda (Palni Kovil), the small kovil of the deity

Another holy place in Kataragama visited by pilgrims is Sella Kataragama where a small sanctuary in honour of Ganesha can be found. According to the belief of the people, Sella Kataragama has a special significance. Many Sinhalese and Tamils come to Kataragama to get married. After the ceremony, the young couple pilgrimages to Sella and spend their first night there in a romantic adventure of the deity. Halfway to Kataragama, lies Valli Amma cave. Kataramalai, too, the hill of Katara or Karthikeya is visited by pilgrims during festivals. The Vedahitiya Kanda is the hill where the deity lived for a long time with His beloved.



Kataragama Temple on the hilltop. Photos by S. Makeswaran

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

The Temple opens at 5.00am. when the temple bell rings and the pujas takes place.

The second puja is between six and seven in the evening then the preparation for the perahera is done followed by the elephant mounted procession. The rituals in Maha – Devale and other temples in Kataragama are supervised by the twelve Kapuralas. The rules for carrying out the rituals are written down in the Kumara Tantra i.e. a script which still today serves as a guide for the kapuralas.

### Annual Festivals

Three annual festivals are held as follows:

- Esala Perahera

The main festival of Kataragama which starts with the new moon in July lasts about two weeks. It is heralded by the magul perahera, which is held for ten successive nights. In these, the love-affair of the deity with his beloved and their union are symbolically demonstrated. After the last night follows the so called water-cutting-ceremony, which always takes place in the morning of the full-moon day. The entire festival consists of a dramatic staging of the legendary traditions of Skanda, especially concerning the episodes that happened in Kataragama.

- Ilmaha Kachi

It is the second festival that last for three days.

- Aluth Aurutha

It is the third festival which is held in April to coincide with the Sinhalese and Tamil New Year which normally falls on April 13th or 14th. It lasts only one day.

## CONCLUSION

Today, as it was for hundreds and thousands of years, it is still the destination of many thousands of pious men and women every year. They come here from far and near. Some in the last lap of their life, summoning the last strength, desirous of seeking salvation in the presence of God or to fulfill vows pledged in gratitude.

Today, Kataragama is a town and has become a

self-contained township and almost every thing that is needed is available including restaurants and hotels.

The religious activities of the Kataragama temple, fire walking, religious processions and water-cutting ceremonies as well as other relevant events of religious significance attract tourists and devotees alike.

## SHORT NOTES

### AARUPADAI VEEDU – THE SIX ABODES OF LORD SUBRAMANIYAR

There is a Sangam text by name, Thirumurugaatrupadai composed by Nakkeerar. In the work, the poet – author sings the greatness of Six Kshetras of Lord Karthikeya. There are collectively known as Aarupadai Veedu.

#### 1. Thiruvaavinankudi (Pazhani)

Lord Subrahmanya was worshipped by Lakshmi (Thiru), Kaamadhenu (Aavu), Sun (Inan), Goddess Earth (Ku) and Agni (Di), hence the name. Later on, Bhogar, a Siddhar, established the image of Thandaayuthapaani on a hillock nearby by making the image with nine medicinal elements called Navaapaashaanam.

#### 2. Thiruchendoor

Lord Subramaniyar prayed to Lord Siva before the destruction of Taarakaasuran here.

#### 3. Triutthanigai (Tiruttani)

Lord Subramaniyar established Himself on this hillock to pacify (Tanithal). His anger after destroying Taaraka. His chest is marked by Sudarshana chakra which he carried in the battle.

#### 4. Thirupparankunram

This is the place where Lord Subramaniyar married Theivaiyanai, the daughter of Indran.

#### 5. Swamimalai

Lord Subramaniyar is supposed to be in a state of eternal Bliss, standing on this small hillock. Subramaniyar imparts the true significance of 'OM' to Lord Siva.

#### 6. Pazhamuthirsolai

Located on the hillock of Azhagar malai, Pazhamuthirsolai about 21km south from Madurai, where the Lord is worshipped in the form of 'Vel', the Shakthi weapon that He always carries with him.

# Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Kovil, Jaffna

*An ancient temple constructed by a Chola princess*

## INTRODUCTION

The word 'Maviddapuram' derived its name from 'Ma' (horse), vidda' (rid of) 'puram' (city). This ancient temple built in the 7th century, has been a source of inspiration and guidance to the people of Jaffna in their religious, social, educational and cultural activities for several centuries when Tamil Kings had founded endowment for it. As a centre of activities, this temple had been providing its congregation of devotees with all its facilities and necessities of religious life till the 15th century when the Portuguese and later the Dutch, who came as conquerors, destroyed several Saiva shrines including this ancient temple during their rule.

However, when the British set foot here in the 19th century they allowed the reconstruction of the damaged and razed temple buildings. Since then, the Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple now known as MAVAL KANTHAN SHRINE, has regained its importance and continues to cater for the needs of the people.

## LEGENDARY ORIGIN

Marutha Pira Vika Valli, a Chola princess of Tanjore, desirous of being freed of her facial deformity (horse) and a lingering intestinal disorder, came to Lanka. She was guided by divine counsel to go on



a pilgrimage and to take a holy bath at the sacred spring (tank) of Kandaki now known as Keerimalai, Illankai. Having performed these holy deeds, she regained in full her facial beauty and was cured of her intestinal disorder.

She resolved to build a Kandaswamy temple as a memento of her gratitude to this holy place. She brought in images of Kandaswamy and His two

Consorts from Chola country with the help of her father. In addition she also brought in, a Brahmin priest from Thillai (Chidambaram) and lots of temple utensils.

The port of landing was called GAYATHURA which changed to KASATHURAI and eventually called KANKESANTHURAI after the image KANKEYA (Kandaswamy).

Ukkirasinghan a prince of the Kalinga dynasty, a devotee of Karthikeya and founder of the first Kalinga kingdom of Jaffna in 8th century married princess Marutha-Pira-Vika-valli, and helped her in the completion of the temple and attended the Thusarokanam (first flag hoisting ceremony), under the Asterism of Uthiram. The king and queen were married at Kantharodai and finally settled down in their capital –Singhainagar near or about Vallipuram. They were blessed with a son named Balasingan.

#### LOCATION

KOVITKADAVAI is the name given to the holy place of Maviddapuram and the adjoining two areas of Kankesanthurai and Keerimalai.

The Temple is located on the 10th mile of Jaffna-Kankesanthurai road (K.K.S. Road). Devotees from the surrounding areas congregate and participate in all the major festivals and on Fridays. The surrounding areas include villages of Thyiddi, Veemankamam, Varuthalai Vilan, Kadduvan, Kurumbachiddi, Tellippalai, Allaveddy, Kollankaleddy, Pannalai, Elavalai, Karukampanai, Naguleswaram and Myliddy.

Maviddapuram itself comprises of the Town Council of Kankesanthurai and the local councils of Tellippalai and Myliddy. The temple can be reached via Kankesanthurai Road. The Railway Station of Maviddapuram which was once functional and was an access to the temple is currently not in operation. To the East about 2 miles away is the Palaly Military Airport. To the west of the temple about 2 miles away is Keerimalai.

#### THE TEMPLE

It is said that the 5-tiered Rajagopuram of Chola architecture fronting the Kankesanthurai Road (west side) is 74 feet tall and directly opposite on





the eastern end is the Rajagopuram East. Moving in from there one would arrive at the Dwara Gopuram ie the entrance to the temple. There are a number of Mandapams (halls) at various locations within the confines of the inner and outer prakarams of the temple which are as follows:

- 1st prakara Vasantha Mandapam
- 2nd prakara Vasantha Mandapam
- Sthamba Mandapam
- Shanmuga Mandapam
- Luxmy Mandapam
- Santhaana Gopalar Mandapam and
- Pushpa Mandapam

Besides the various mandapams the temple has also provided Madapalli (cooking place) vahanasalai – garage for parking temple rathams etc and resting place for devotees.

The temple has a number of vahanams (carrier vehicles). A notable one is the sapparam (sapai + pratham) – one of the tallest in Jaffna with eight wheels and nine decks. It is pulled with ropes with a length of 108 feet per length.

### The Sacred Tree (sthala vriksha)

The sacred tree of this temple is mango tree.

## THE MAVAI AATHEENAM

The Mavai Aatheenam is headed by a trustee appointed in succession from among the Kandaswamy Temple Priests. Traditionally the decendants of the Temple priest family succeed upon the demise of the predecessor. Currently (as at 14th May 2011) the trustee of the Mavai Aatheenam is Maharajasri S.D. Shanmuganatha Kurukkal. Since 7th June 1975 the temple is managed by Mavai Kanthan Temple Management Council.

The management of the temple takes pride in maintaining the historical records of the temple. In particular a record of the trustees of the Aatheenam is being maintained since 2nd June 789. A few trustees are furnished below:

S/No	Decendent of Aatheenam (Names)	Period		Years of service
		From	To	
01	Desikar Periamanathullar	02.06.789	30.11.829	40
02	Desikar Chidambaram	30.11.829	07.01.870	41
03	x x x	x x x	x x x	x
	↓			
36	x x x	x x x	x x x	x
37	S. Thuraisamy Kurukkal	28.11.1943	27.11.1976	33
38	S.T. Shanmuga Natha Kurukkal	27.11.1976	August 2011	35
39	Maharajah Sri Rathinasabapathy Kurukkal	August 2011		

The priests who are serving in the Maviddapuram Aatheenam come from the Desikar of Thillai origin (Chidambaran) Temple. From the 7th century to the 15th century the pooja and the temple rituals were carried out by desikars. Thereafter the link was severed. It was established by researchers that the current trustee is of desikar origin.

Shanmuga Natha Kurukkal (trustee)



## MAJOR FESTIVALS

The annual high festivals of this temple commence on the fifth day after the new moon of the Hindu month of Aani (June 15th–July 15th) and extending up to the new moon of Aadi (July 15–August 15). The crowning ceremony is the well known Aadi Amavasai' Theertham at the holy springs of Keerimalai.

One of the very important festivals of this temple is Skanthashasti which is a 6-day festival of fast, penance and prayers. This festival occurs during the month of Aippasi (October/November).

The Kandaswamy Temple of Mavai has had close links with the Durga Temple of Tellippalai. According to the available records in the year 1815 Kandaswamy Temple of Maviddapuram held its Maha Kumba Abishegam ceremony (consecration) and in 1829 Durga Devi Temple of Tellippalai had its Maha Kumba Absihegam.

In 1829 during the Vijayathasami festival (Navarathiri), Lord Murugan of Mavai went to the Durga Temple in procession to the temple at Tellippalai to participate in the Vanni tree cutting (Vanni) ceremony. This practice has been going on annually but discontinued now for security reasons. Similarly, the temple has close links with Keerimalai Sivan Temple during Aadi Amavasai festival.



## CONCLUSION

The historic and ancient temple of Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple building suffered damage and destruction owing to the effects of the savage war and military operation. The temple rituals and festivals were restricted and the population around the area have moved out and houses and buildings were abandoned. The temple itself was in a neglected state with very few devotees patronizing the temple.

Currently, the security in and around the temple has been relaxed. Therefore devotees and tourist are allowed to visit both the temples at Maviddapuram and Keerimalai (Naguleswaram). The temple is in dire needs of funds to renovate and restore the ancient building.

### Note:

Donations can be sent to: Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Kovil, Mavai Aatheenam. Bank: Mavai Murugan Thiruppani Fund, Peoples Bank, Kankesanthurai Branch A/C No: 1531.

# Nallur Kandaswamy Temple, Jaffna

*Also known Alankara Kanthan*



## INTRODUCTION

Nallur, the celebrated city founded by Singhai Ariyan (Vijayakalingan) first Ariya Chakravarthi King of Jaffna, continued to be the capital of the several Ariya Chakravarthi Kings ruling Jaffna as Segarajasekaram or Pararajasekaram for about 300 years.

The Nallur Kandaswamy Temple is not very ancient in comparison with Maviddapuram Kandaswamy Temple or similar ancient temples. Historians assert that there is historical evidence to assume that the Nallur Temple was founded in 948AD in a place called Kurukkal Valaivu and the

present temple is situated in the same location. It is said that in 1248AD, the temple was developed by Buvaneka Vahu, the Chief Minister to Vijayakalinga Ariya Chakravarthi who was reigning at Singhai Nagar. Buvaneka Vahu was a learned and eminent Brahmin from Madurai.

However, several references give the entire credit for building the city of Nallur and the Kandaswamy Temple to General Sempaha Perumal who ruled at Nallur for 17 years from 1450. He, of course may have been responsible for the erection of a proper structure or traditional temple status, restoring an

earlier structure in the city that he had demolished in the course of warfare.

The structure was the pride of Jaffna; it was not at the present site but at Muthirai Chantai in Sankiliyan Thoppu about half a mile to the east and about two and a half miles from Jaffna town on the Jaffna Point Pedro Road. The temple was levelled to the ground in 1620 by the Portuguese General – Philip de Oliveira after Sankili Kumaran's defeat in the battle of Vannarpannai, leaving no trace of its foundation.

It is said that under the Jaffna Kingdom, the city of Nallur was a hive of activities where literary persons, artists and poets came to entertain the King in his court. According to the cultural practices of the day, there were many religious and cultural buildings and places adjoining the temple.

In 1658, the Dutch captured Jaffna from the Portuguese. Like their predecessors, they too were intent on spreading Christianity. However, towards the latter part of their reign, they relaxed their policies.

The present Kandaswamy temple at Nallur, originated during the days of Dutch rule. In 1734, Don Juan Ragunatha Mappana Mudaliyar who was in the service of the Dutch Government and enjoyed their favour, got their permission to have a Madalayam for holding Kandapurana recitals and that building also housed a Vel, which was worshipped by the followers. Eventually, a proper temple structure was erected in 1807 by the Mudaliyar who was then an officer at the Jaffna Kachcheri. In 1899, the first bell was mounted.

Arumuga Navalar, a great Saiva reformer and revivalist took a great interest in the temple during the 1870's. His insistence on the temple rituals being performed in accordance with traditional ways often brought him in conflict with the temple management. In any case, he is said to have been responsible for installing the principal deity in the correct place, for introducing group recital of thevarams after puja, and the discontinuance of sacrifice of animals.

The Moolasthanam was constructed with granite stones and the Kumba Abishegam was held in 1902 and for the surrounding temple building in 1909.



Nallur Kandaswamy

## LOCATION

The temple is about 3 miles from Jaffna town and stands at the corner of Temple Road on the Westside and Point Pedro Road on the south side. The majestic appearance commands a reverence even from the bystanders regardless of faith.

## THE TEMPLE

The temple faces the east and exhibits an ornately curved 5-tiered front Gopuram, bell towers and the gopuram for Arumugaswamy. On the eastern side facing the temple is the famous theradi where the Therchariot is parked. This area was used by Yogi's and Swami's for meditation. In recent times, Chellapa Swami and Yogaswami sat under the Bael (Vilvam) tree by the Theradi in meditation.

## Inner Court

The fore court is large and is flanked by the inner most court. The holy sanctum housing the hallowed Vel is visible through an archway.

## Mandapams

The temple has various mandapams. The significant mandapams are as follows:

- Arthamandapam
- Maha Mandapam
- Nirtha Mandapam
- Vasantha Mandapam
- Arumugaswamy temple Mandapam
- Thetkuveethi (south) Mandapam
- Sthamba Mandapam

The temple has Theerthakerni (holy tank) and Nanthavanam (flower garden).

## Deities

The deities includes the following:

- Sakthi Vel (presiding deity)

- Arumugaswamy
- Muthucomaraswamy
- Ganapathy
- Amman
- Santhaanagopalar
- Vairavar

## Outer Court

The outer court consists of public roads and private land belonging to the temple and other residents. During festival times, the deity comes out on a vahanam to parade round the temple.

The temple is also surrounded by other religious, cultural and social institutions. These buildings together with the temple complex constitute Nallur village which has a unique bonding with Nallur Kandaswamy and the temple.

## DAILY PUJAS AND MAJOR FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

Pujas are held six times a day as follows:

- 5.00am Ushatkalam
- 10.00am Kaalaisanthi
- 1.00pm Uchchikalam
- 5.00pm Sayangkalam
- 6.00pm Erandaamkalam (Fridays 6.30pm)
- 7.00pm Arthajamam

### Major Festivals (July/August)

The annual festival is a stupendous grand occasion, lasting 26 days, finishing on the new moon day in August. The festival commences with the flag hoisting ceremony on the first day at 12.00 noon.

On the 10th day, the Kailasa Vahanam is used in the morning. In the evening, the Muthucomaraswamy Moorthy is taken out on the Manjam ratham and the Karthigai day festival, which falls on the 17th or 18th day, the same deity is taken out on a Sapparam.

On the 22nd day (Mampalam festival), the puranic immortal incident of divine Brothers Vinayagamoorthy and Sri Murugan vying for the single mango from the parents is depicted. The Ther (chariot) festival on the 24th day is undoubtedly the grand climax of all festivals in Jaffna.

The largest crowd possible throngs the site when Arumuga Peruman is taken for the circumbulation in the morning.

The Theertha festival is observed on the following day in the Thirukulam, and rituals performed for terminating the festival season, by bringing down the flag at the end of the evening festival.

During this Mahotsava festival, the Nallur temple is said to portray as 'Kailayam on earth'. The following day, the 'Thirukalyanam' – a divine social nuptial is depicted when the wedding of Murugan to Sri Valli is solemnised. The other festivals include Navarathiri, Kanthashasti, Thiruvembhavai, Thai ponggal, Thai pusam, Mahasivarathiri and Panguni Utthiram.

## CUSTODIAN OF THE KANDASWAMY TEMPLE

Kumaradas Mappana Mudaliyar, the present custodian of the Kandaswamy Temple hails from the Mappanar Dynasty and enjoys the position as the tenth custodian commencing from Don Juan Ragunatha Mappana Mudaliyar.

The custodians down the lineage 'Mappanar Vamsa paramparai' are as follows:

- Ragunatha Mappana Mudaliyar
- Arumuga Mappanar
- Ragunatha Mappanar II with Sangkarapillai
- Kandiah Mappana Mudaliyar
- Arumuga Mappanar
- Ragunatha Mappanar
- Shanmuga Das Mappana Mudaliyar

## CONCLUSION

Nallur village has the temple at its centre with numerous other religious, cultural and community organisations surrounding and enriching the lives

of those living in and around its village.

Nallur Kanthan is surrounded by his divine family. In the vicinity temples are situated for Brother Ganesha in Kailasa Pillayar temple, Father Siva in Saddanathar temple & Mother Shakthi in Veeramakali Amman temple. There are other temples such as Nallur Sivan temple and other similar temples. During religious days devotees attend pujas by going from temple to temple.

The trademark red and white striped walls, the gold plated doors and the decor, the water tank and the inner sanctum sanctorium are all halcyon treasures in the hallowed portals of a Jaffna Tamil's memory.

The Nallur Kandaswamy Temple, as one of the foremost shrines in the Northern peninsula, offers its devotees and anyone who visits a spiritual realm embodied in beautiful architecture and artistry. Even from a distance one can see the temple tower merging with the sky as if to remind us the presence of a spiritual beacon that resonates all around.

## SHORT NOTES

### SUBRAMANIYAR – FORM & SIGNIFICANCE

Lord Subramaniyar, the fire born son of Lord Siva stands for perfect self-control and yogi in His Thandapani state, the ascetic boy. But in this six-faced form, the six faces represent the six fold characteristics that differentiate the divine from the others, namely – omniscience, non-attachment, omnipotence, overlordship, grace and glory. The one endowed with these six qualities is God. The six-faced majestic form reveals the Supreme Power.

The peacock stands for Ego. The divinity can be realized only upon quelling the Ego.

# Selva Sannithy Murugan Temple Thondamanaru

*Revered as Kathirgamam of the North*



## INTRODUCTION

The temple is located in Thondamanaru – a place on the northern coast of Jaffna Peninsula and is revered as Sella Kathirkamam. At this Murugan Temple, a free environment of worship pervades the place as practiced at the holy place of Kataragama. Persons of various creeds and caste congregate here to seek the blessing of the Muruga Vel, installed at this Sannithanam – Selva Sannithy.

## LEGENDARY VERSION

This holy place is very old and steeped with history. It is said that thousands of years ago that Veeravaahu Thevar while on his mission to meet Soorapathman

as a messenger left his foot print at a place called Kallodai.

On his return it was found necessary for him to perform puja. Therefore, under the shade of a poovarasa tree, he placed a Vel and worshipped Lord Muruga. Even today, the footprint at Kallodai which is located to the north of the temple is being safeguarded and maintained.

Thereafter, sages, sithars and yogis have meditated at this place and attained mukti.

In the olden days, there was a small temple on the present site but owing to dispute among the owners, early in the eighteen century, the temple was closed

and the daily pujas ceased to be performed.

It is said that in 1840, an ardent devotee of Murugan, a pious but not educated man, from the village, named Maruthar Kathirgamar went to the holy place of Kataragama. There he was rewarded with a gift of a silver Vel, the emblem of Murugan. He brought this sacred Vel and installed it in a Madam at the side, and performed daily pujas to the sacred Vel. Later he was permitted to use the temple itself, which he eventually took over. Since, then he and his group of devotees had been officially managing with piety and to the satisfaction of the devotees of Lord Murugan.

The place Thondamanaru denotes Thondaman i.e. a name of a person and a river formerly known as Valliaru that was named after him. It would be interesting to note the events that lead to naming this holy place of Thondamanaru.

King Kulatunga I of Chola Dynasty ruled South India from 1070–1118 and that prevalent time, Jaffna was ruled by King Vijayabahu. Enmity arose between these Kings and Vijayabahu challenged Kulatunga I to a war. There was at that time a provincial king under the Chola Dynasty cum Head of the army named Thondaman Karunakaran. His full name was Pallavaraya Thiruvaranga Thondaman Karunakaran. In South India, he was the head of a province bordering the Karnataka state with Vandalore as the provincial capital.

In response to the challenge by King Vijayabahu, the King of Jaffna, Kulathunga I sent his army headed by Thondaman a reputed warrior. Thondaman and his army invaded Jaffna and King Vijayabahu was defeated. Thus Jaffna became part of the Chola Kingdom rule. Thondaman and his army of men camped in a place which is the present site of Thondamanaru and eventually settled down in that place. Thondaman himself was a Vaishnavite (worships Vishnu). King Kulathunga I made Thondaman responsible for the procurement and export of salt from Jaffna to India. Salt was found in abundance in places like Karanavai, Chemmai, and Vellaparavai. Thondaman, managing the affairs, found it necessary to excavate and deepen the river called Vaekaranai Aru in order that the ship could

be brought in using this river to load the salt for India. The temple by the side of the river (the newly cut water way) would have been the place of worship of settlement that got founded in this locality. The deepened Vaekaranai river was eventually known as Thondamanaru and so was the place where Selva Sannithy Murugan Temple stands.

The temple, however suffered the fate of devastation, like all other Hindu temples, in the hands of the foreign invaders of the 16th century. Later during the era of the revival of Hinduism in Jaffna, a temple was erected.

### LOCATION

The holy temple is situated about 20 miles away to the north from Jaffna town. River Thondamanaru is the theertham that flows to the left side of the village passing by the holy temple and towards the confluence of the river with the sea of Palk Strait. This river is also called Pallaru because of the white salt deposits.

Besides the Selva Sannithy Murugan Temple, there are other temples located in the surrounding as follows:

- Thatchai Kollai Sithi Vinayagar Temple
- Bathira Kali Amman Temple
- Koniyyin Bathira Kali Amman Temple
- Veera Maha Mariamman Temple
- Ganeshar Temple
- Vairavar Temple

### TEMPLE

The Selva Sannithy Murugan is also known as Kalodai Kanthan, Aarthangkarai Kanthan and Annathana Kanthan.

The waters of the Thondamanaru is considered as 'theertham' where fresh water flows into the sea past the site of the temple. Thus, it elevates the location to a 'sthalam', blessed with a triple adjuncts of Theertham, Sthalam, and Moorthy.

The temple has a number of Madams providing facilities for pilgrims, devotees and for annathaanam, namely Annathana Madam, Kandaswamy Iyer Madam.

The temple has no flag pole, Nandi, Palipeedam



and Homam Kundam (fire pit) as it differs in ritualistic worship performed by other temples.

### Deities

Presiding deity:

- Vel

Other deities:

- Pillaiyar
- Valliamman
- Mariamman
- Nagambiran

### Sacred Tree (Sthala Vriksha)

The sacred tree is the Poovarasu tree.

## DAILY PUJAS AND ANNUAL FESTIVALS

### Daily Pujas

The temple functions well with daily pujas three times a day except on Fridays when the puja on that day is performed four times.

The poosagar (priest) who conducts the rituals are descendants of Bararatha Kula Vamsam. On the festival days, the Chief Poosagar is seen wearing silk dhoti and waist wrapped in cloth, the mouth covered with a white cloth with a head band. The pujas are performed in silence without chanting any mantras, and thevarams and religious hymns are sung. A tray with holy ash heaped in the center and with burning camphor placed on that heap of ash would be equivalent to theebaarathanai.

### Major Festivals

The Annual festivals lasting 14 days concluding with theertham is held in the month of Aavani (August/September).

Kanthashashti is another major festival. The Utsava festival of Pookarer (flowermen) or flower vendors is an elaborate festival when all the 'pookarar' take the centre stage and are considered as life blood of the festival. The pookarar are descendants of Maruther Kathirkamar and are located in various surrounding villages and some are even overseas who would grace this grand occasion. The participating pookarar will appoint a Chief from amongst them and all of them will work in unison. They should refrain from meat eating, alcohol and smoking, and are required to sleep in the temple Madam until the conclusion of

the festival. They sleep on the bare floor without pillows or mattresses. There is no personal grooming and their faces are kept unshaven.

The Pookarar festival would require all varieties of fresh flowers to decorate the deities, chariot and temple building. The flower men will set on their journey to gather all types of flowers and would also cover the neighbouring villages and if found necessary, they would put up the night in the respective villages. The plucking of flowers operation covers the following villages including the home village of Thondamanaru:

- Valvettithurai
- Komaanthurai
- Maiyiliathanai
- Oorikaadu
- Idaikaadu
- Kathiripaai
- Achuveli
- Myliddy
- Parithithurai
- Chavakacheri

The flowers must be plucked from the tree and shed flowers should not be included. The flower basket dully filled with flowers should not be let down on the ground at any time on the way back to the temple.

The following day after the festival, the flowermen have a special puja seeking the blessing of Vel Murugan. The concluding ceremony of the day is the grand send off of the Chief Poosagar with mangala vathiyam and procession to his residence, an honour and appreciation for the job well done.



Above: Thondamanaru River. Right: Sacred tree – Poovarasu

## CONCLUSION

The Selva Sannithy Murugan is a well known and famous temple with several Madams in the locality. Devotees and mendicants throng this place during major festivals. The historical Thondamanar Lagoon enhances the Sthalam with theertham facilities. Annathanam or food serving is done and several devotees come and distribute food – annathanam, fulfilling their vows.



# Temple worship, icons and spiritual energy

*Powers in the temple viewed through a scientific perspective*

Temple worship is an applied science of spirituality evolved by the ancient explores of Truth and a modern investigation into the subtle technology involved may lead us to a rational understanding of spirituality.

The science of temple worship, which is an effective means for the conditioned human mind to be in communion with the Supreme, can be better understood through a scientific perspective. This spiritual practice is not based on blind faith but founded on well-coordinated subtle principles, which are the outcome of the deepest inquiries into reality.

Towering ancient temples are seen throughout the length and breadth of India. For the devotees they are centres of power and peace and the devotees enjoy the holy and serene atmosphere in the temple. Some of these temples are founded by great rishis in ancient ages.

The ancient rishis of India focussed their attention to discover the basic secrets of existence and the knowledge they received are enshrined in the Vedas, the upanisads and in the symbolic stories of the Puraanas etc.

Recent trends indicate that there has been a resurgence of awareness about the efficacy of temple worship and scientists have joined the ranks of those who go to temple and worship the vigrahams, the icons symbolising the Divine.

The ancient rishis declared that the fundamental basis of the universe is an intelligence and the deeper understanding of the universe called for an exploration of the inner depth of man himself.

Today there is a growing trend among the modern thinkers to recognise the ancient view that in the depth of human consciousness lies the key to all

the secrets of the universe.

The seers of India assert that the true evolution of man involves an increasing expression of the Universal Intelligence in his physical body, which brings him true knowledge and freedom. They devised several methods to help him achieve this inner evolutionary expansion. They prescribed panchaloha, a combination of five metals, an ideal material for moulding divine icons. The 'unknown energy' it is said, exerts a strong influence on water, which points to the potent power of the theertham, the holy water, the sandal paste, the kumkum powder, etc., given in temples to energize us with positive power.

Temples are not just places where an icon is put up as a symbolic representation of the Divine, but living centres of active emanation of spiritual energy that can influence the body and mind of man in his evolutionary progress. **The specific shapes of the icons must be specific patterns the seers evolved to hold certain special creative aspects of the all-pervading formless, boundless Divine Energy, which is the basis of all forms and manifestations.**

According to the ancient spiritual concept the 'left' is symbolic of Shakthi, the primeval active Energy, and the 'right' of Shiva, the static Consciousness.

Many modern researches on human mind, its inner secrets, its unknown potentialities and powers, taking place in several scientifically advanced countries not only tend to support the wisdom of these ancient seers, but also shed new light on the deeper significance of temples founded by them. The ancient rishis discovered the existence of a subtle form of energy associated with the phenomenon

of consciousness. They also discovered the relation of this energy with the subtle sound vibrations and form patterns in the universe. They investigated into the power of sound and relevance of forms in activating and channelizing this energy associated with intelligence and discovered the means to maintain it, active and utilise it for the benefit of mankind. They were technologists of a high order interested in the ethical and spiritual progress of man.

We relegate the ancient mystic diagrams with

triangles, squares, circles, etc in such talismans as yantras and chackeras, as belonging to some dimension incomprehensible to us or as symbols of hopelessly irrational superstition.

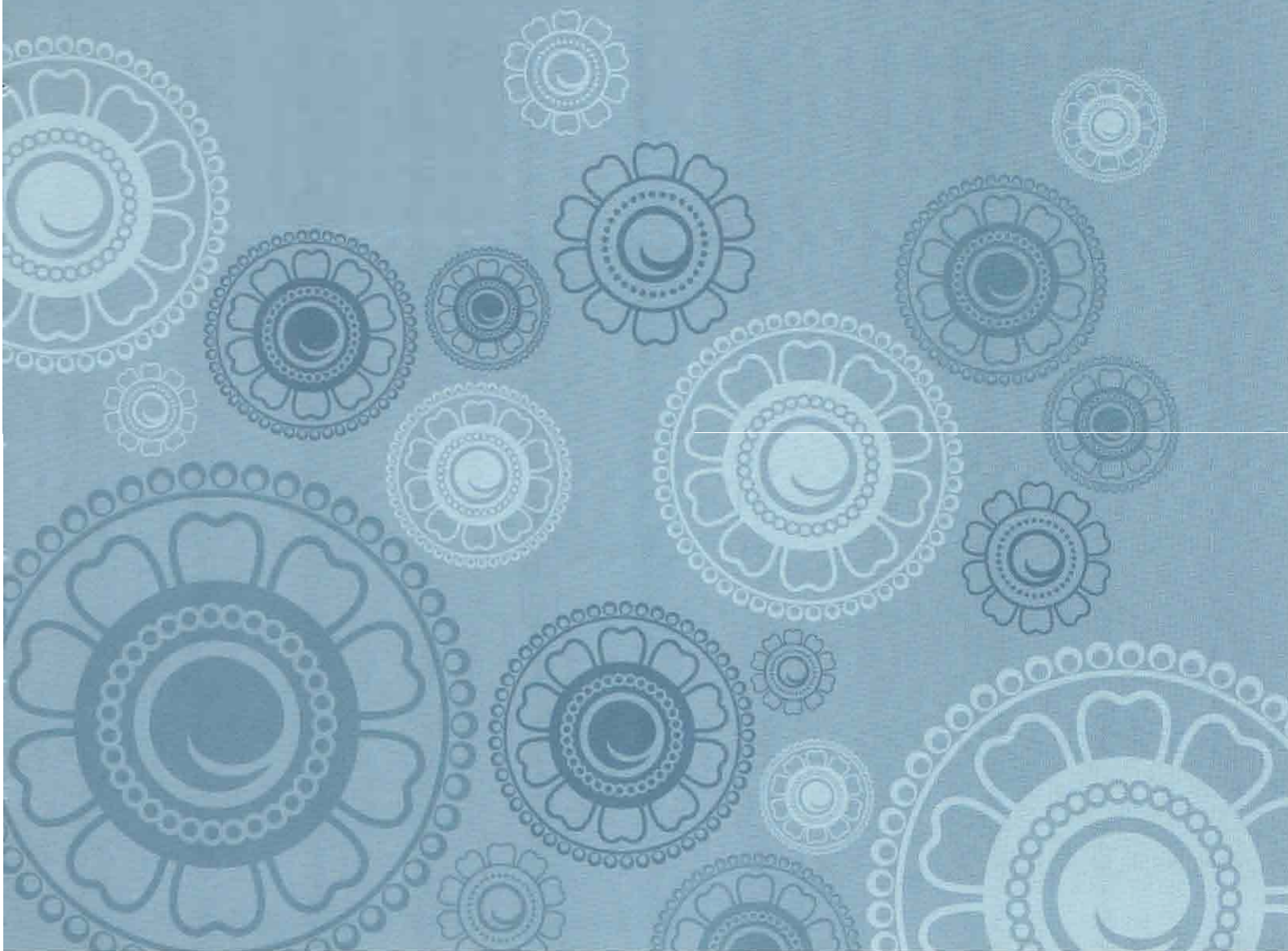
The present trend indicates that a philosophical vision is emerging from modern scientific quest and science is slowly veering towards the spiritual insights of the ancient sages. In future, science and spirituality may converge and blend; and that may speed up the further evolution of mankind.

*“Know that there must be manifestation of God in places where countless people have practiced austerity. From time immemorial, numberless devotees and men of realization have come to these holy places to have the vision of God.*

*Therefore, God, though equally present everywhere, manifests Himself especially in these places in the same way as water can be had anywhere by digging the ground, but where there is a tank or a lake, one has not to dig for water, but can get it whenever one likes.”*

– Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa

# APPENDICES



## APPENDICES

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# Ananda K. Coomaraswamy

*Warrior for Dharma*

## INTRODUCTION

Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1874–1947) was one of the great art historians of the 20th century. He was involved and made an indepth study of arts, crafts, mythologies, cultures, folklores, symbolisms and religions of both East and West.

He was considered as one of the leading members of the traditionalists or perennialist school of comparative religious thoughts. He was fully involved in the research of the past, investigating not only arts and crafts but also of the social values and customs which he had helped to shape them in the sub-continent of India and the island of Ceylon. Towards this he moved backward and forward between Ceylon, India and his country of residence – England.

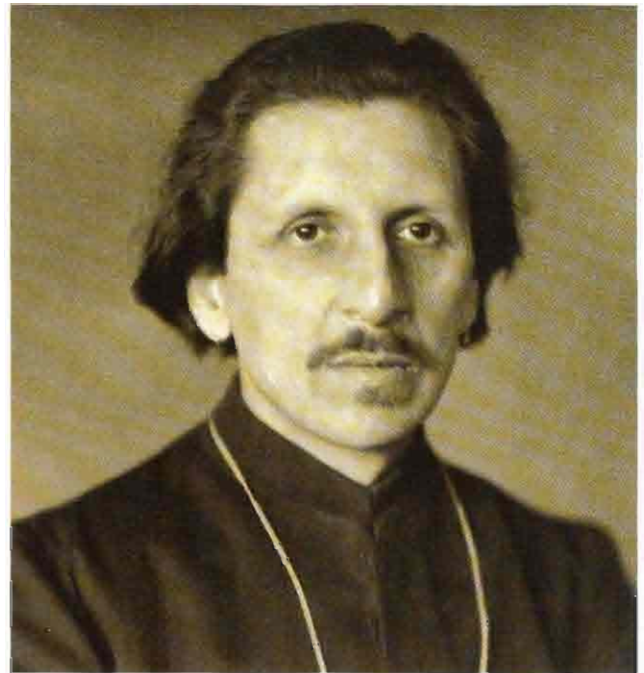
## HIS LIFE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

He was born in Ceylon in 1874 – his father a Tamil and his Mother an English. Following the early death of his father, he was brought up in England.

He was educated at Wycliffe College and at London University where he studied botany and geology. As part of his doctoral work he carried out a scientific survey of the mineralogy of Ceylon. Eventually, he became absorbed and was involved in a study on the traditional arts and crafts of Ceylon and of the social conditions under which they had to be produced. In turn, he became increasingly distressed by the appalling effects of the British Colonialism.

## HIS CONTRIBUTIONS

Coomaraswamy's achievement as an art historian can be best understood in respect of three major tasks which he undertook. These are:



1. the 'rehabilitation' of Asian art in the eyes of the Europeans and Asians alike;
2. the massive work of scholarship which he pursued as curator of the Indian Section of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts;
3. the penetration and explanation of traditional views of art and their relationship to philosophy, religion and metaphysics.

In assessing Coomaraswamy's achievement, it needs to be remembered that the conventional attitude of the Edwardian era towards the art of Asia was contemptuous, for Asian art was often dismissed as 'barbarous', 'second rate' and 'inferior'. In short, there was in England at least an almost total ignorance of the sacred iconographies of the East. Worst still, such attitude has infected the Indian intelligentsia, exposed as it was to Western education and influence.

Following the early days of his field work in

Ceylon, he set about dismantling these prejudices through an affirmation of the beauty, integrity, and spiritual density of traditional art in Ceylon and India and later in other parts of Asia. He was bent on the task of demonstrating the existence of an artistic heritage at least the equal of Europe.

As a Curator at the Boston Museum from 1917 onwards, Coomaraswamy performed a mighty task in classifying, cataloguing and explaining thousands of items of oriental art. Through his professional work, his writings, lectures, and personal associations, Coomaraswamy left an indelible imprint on the work of many American galleries and museums and influenced a wide range of orators, art historians, orientalist and critics.

### BOOKS AND ESSAYS

He has written books and essays and in the later years of his life, his focus was on Vedanta, Catholic scholastic and mystics. Some of the books and essays associated with his work are worthy of mention:



#### Essays

- Selected Papers, Metaphysics
- The Vedanta and Western Tradition
- Sri Ramakrishna and Religious Tolerance
- Recollection, Indian and Platonic
- On the One and Only Transmigrant
- On the Indian and Traditional Psychology or Rather Pneumatology

#### Books

- *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Arts* (1939)
- *Hinduism and Buddhism* (1943)
- *Time and Eternity* (1947)

#### Posthumous Collection of Essays

- Sources of Wisdom (1981)
- What is Civilization (1989)

### CONCLUSION

In 1906, Coomaraswamy founded the Ceylon Reform Society of which he was the President and driving force. The Society addressed itself to the preservation and revival not only of traditional art and craft but also of the social values and customs which had helped to shape them.

The Society also dedicated itself in the words of the manifesto, to discouraging "*the thoughtless imitation of unsuitable European habits and customs*". He called for a reawakened pride in Ceylon's past and in her cultural heritage. The fact that he was half English in no way blinkered his view of the impoverishment of national life brought by the British presence in both Ceylon and India.

In India he forged close relationship with the Tagore family. All the while in the sub-continent, he was researching the past, investigating arts and crafts, uncovering forgotten and neglected schools of religious and court art, writing scholarly and popular works, lecturing and organizing bodies such as the Ceylon Social Reform Society and in England, the India Society.

He revolutionized several specific fields of history, and radically changed others. His work on Singhalese arts and crafts and on Rajput painting, though they can now be seen as formative in the light of his later work on Buddhist iconography and on Indian platonic and Christian theories of art, were nevertheless early signs of a stupendous scholarship.

His influence was not only felt in the some what rarefied domain of art scholarship, but percolated into other scholarship fields and eventually must have had some influence on popular attitudes in Ceylon, India, England and America.

In 1947, Coomaraswamy intended to retire from his position as Curator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in order to return to India, where he planned to complete a new translation of the Upanishads and then to take on Sannyasa (renunciation of the world). These plans however were cut short by his sudden and untimely death in that year.



# Arumuga Navalar

*The great Saiva reformer and revivalist*

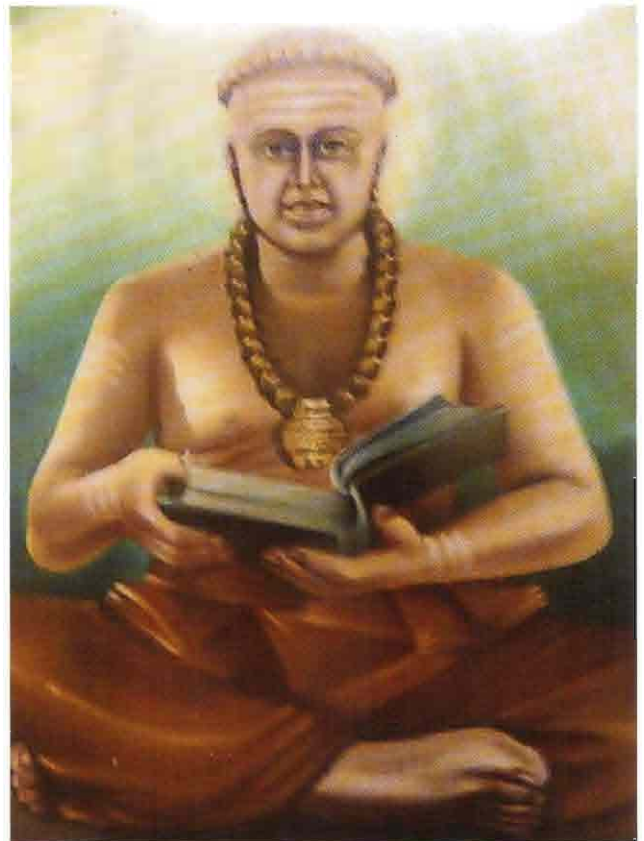
### INTRODUCTION

The Saiva religion had been in the strangle hold of alien forces for two centuries. Jaffna had no leader and was groping in the dark. Navalar came, saw and gave them all relief.

The Portuguese conquered Jaffna and pursued the policy of their motherland, and persecuted people, who were all Saivites. Several of them fled to India and settled in Vedharanyam and Chidambaram. However the vast majority of those who remained in Jaffna adopted the via media of professing the Catholic religion and following the Saiva religion. The rest were genuine Catholics. Subsequently, under the Dutch rule, they were less severe but were none the less anxious to impose their faith on the people. Hence the birth of Protestantism in Jaffna was due to them.

The advent of British rule gave the Saivites of Jaffna some respite. The Saivites felt that they were freed. Saiva Priests came from Vedharanyam and revived Saivism in a few centres. But, priests of other religion also came, not merely to look after the people of their own faith, but with avowed object of winning Saivites to their religion and of undermining Saivism. They came, not as individuals, but as missionary bodies. No other part of Ceylon or Sri Lanka was subject to missionary domination so much as in Jaffna. The Saivites had lost their backbone, in consequence of two centuries of foreign aggression. The Saivites who remained steadfast in their own religion took no action to counteract missionary aggression. Saivism was then at its lowest ebb.

The Tamil language did not suffer in consequence of foreign rule. It had several great scholars. But, it was labouring under two disadvantages, the less



serious of which was the malicious jealousy of its custodians. The Pandit was not prepared to reveal to others the results of his own work. He only taught what the Pandit class knew. With him perished the fruits of his labour.

The handicap of the Tamil was that Tamil books were not in print. Every pupil had to write on palmyrah leaves every one of the books that he wished to study. Navalar printed the more important Tamil works in a press on his own. He wiped out literally monopolies by becoming a teacher himself, and spread knowledge far and wide by writing and preaching. He is said to have been the first preacher in the Saiva world and to have introduced the word '*prasangam*' to denote preaching .

## NAVALAR AND HIS FAMILY BACKGROUND

Navalar was born in Nallur on the 18th of December 1822. He belonged to the clan of Karkattavellalas and his family had long been well known for Tamil scholarship. One of the distinguished members of his family was Gnanaprakasa Munivar, who was a great Agamic scholar and who wrote eight Sanskrit works and a commentary on *Sivagnanasiddhiar* in Tamil. Navalar's great grandfather, Ilankai Kavala Mudaliyar, his grandfather, Paramanander, his father, Kandar were all employed under Government and were also eminent Tamil scholars. His father was also a play-wright, physician and author of several Tamil medical works. Navalar had four elder brothers, all of whom entered Government service. He had three sisters, one of whom was the mother of Vidva Siromani Ponnambalpillai.

## EDUCATION

Navalar received his early education in a small school. When he was nine years old, his father died. His brothers sent him for higher studies, first to Saravanamutthu Pulavar and then to his teacher, Senathiraja Mudaliyar. He always wakes up at four o'clock in the morning and began his studies immediately after his religious observances. The only break from his study during the day was the meal time. He had a delicate constitution and he never took any kind of bodily exercise. He was a perfect stranger to sports and games. He completed his Tamil studies in his twelfth year. He was then sent to the Methodist English School in Jaffna to study English. He soon gained proficiency in the language and the head teacher of the school, Rev. Peter Percival asked him to teach English in the lower classes and Tamil in the upper classes. Navalar spent his spare time in the study of Sanskrit and religious philosophy.

## PERSONAL CHARACTER

Navalar was deeply religious and his activities proceeded from his religion. Service to man was service to God. He served the Saiva religion not because it was his religion or it was the true religion but because he loved Lord Siva. He had regards for

religious men. But he never respected wealth or power. Though he received contributions for his school, he never accepted presents made to him personally. Just as he was free from fear, he was equally free from ordinary anger. But he was not free from religious indignation. When an insult to his religion or to his country came in writing, there would be no one to intervene, and his ire had full sway. Navalar had good social instincts. He also took part in politics when it came to the appointment of a person who was not well qualified as Tamil member to the Legislative Council. He was campaigning for a well qualified person – Mr. (Sir) P. Ramanathan.

## TRANSLATOR AND BIBLICAL WORKS

In his nineteenth year he was offered the work of translating the Bible into Tamil by Rev. Peter Percival. He proposed to accept the offer on condition that he was free to follow his religious observances to preach Saivism and to criticize other religions. The Rev. gentleman had to accept him on his terms as he could not get another like Navalar to do the work.

The Reverend also availed himself of this opportunity to study Tamil Literature and grammar under Navalar. He benefitted so much by his teachings that he often referred to him as his Guru.

Navalar had to study commentaries on the Bible and other biblical works so that his translation might be true to the original and carry with it the spirit of the work. When the translation was completed, Rev. Percival took him to Madras, where the Bible had been translated by a body of Pundits. The two translations were compared and several points of disagreement were found in them. They were, therefore, submitted for choice to a great scholar in Madras, who, not only recommended the Jaffna translations but also admired the scholarship of the translator. The Mission accepted this translation and published it. The translation of the Bible gave Navalar a mastery of the Christian religion which proved to be of great value to him in his work as religious teacher.

## STUDY OF SAIVA RELIGION

While Navalar was engaged in this Biblical work,

he studied the methods adopted by missionaries to spread their religion. He also saw how his own religion was languishing, partly by the neglect of its followers and partly by missionary aggression. He, therefore, took to the study of the Saiva Religion, soon mastered the Saiva Siddhanta works in Tamil and studied Thevaram and Tiruvachakam. Concurrently with these, he studied Sanskrit grammar and literature. He then proceeded to the study of the Saiva agamas, which form the ultimate authoritative works of Saivism. He had to be content with the study of the few Agamas which were then available. He studied Upanishads and Puranas also. Besides these, he studied the Upagamas, Paddathies and several miscellaneous works. Pandit S. Ganapathipillai has, in his introduction to Arunachala Kavirayer's *Life of Navalar*, given a list of over eighty books quoted by Navalar in his works.

He was thus master of Tamil Literature and grammar of the Kriya Kandam and the Gnanakandam of Saivism, possessing good scholarship in Sanskrit and a fair knowledge of English. He was an acute thinker, an able versifier, a facile writer, eloquent speaker, and brilliant controversialist. But all this means no more than that he was a painstaking and mighty genius. There must have been several such geniuses both in Jaffna and in South India. They did not however, become Arumuga Navalars. Along with knowledge, grew his love for God and love of truth. There was in him a close co-ordination between knowing and doing. What he knew to be good and right he always did. His love for God elevated his spirit, and his love for truth created in him a burning passion to spread the truth. These are what made him the Great Navalar that he was.

Navalar's brothers tried in vain to get him married, but Navalar was determined to be a bachelor all his life. Navalar began his public work in his twenty-third year.

### PREACHING SAIVA PHILOSOPHY

He taught Tamil literature and Saiva religion to some young men who had attained scholarship in Tamil. These young men eventually became key persons in the field of teaching, preaching and dissemination

of the Saiva philosophy. The focus of their preaching included the existence of God, worship of God, love of God, love of religion, Siva puja, Siva Deeksha, temple festivals, the purpose of life, the termination of life, abstinence from meat and abstinence from drinks.

A good number of followers adhered to the teachings and received Siva Deeksha, gave up meat eating, became regular temple goers and adopted Siva acharam.

Soon this preaching activity was extended to the villagers. In some villages, schools were established and funds were provided.

### WRITER AND REFORMIST

He also wrote books such as *Subra Bodham* and *Saiva Dooshana Parikaram*.

In *Subra Bodham*, Navalar says that those who interpret the Puranas do not know even the fundamentals of Saivism and speak of Siva and Subramanya as actually marrying their Shaktis. Those who know everything of religion know that God is formless and Omnipresent and "that it is absurd to speak of God marrying anyone". Navalar also condemns in his book the hellish practice of nautch dance in temples, and exhorts temple managers to replace it by the recital of Thevaram and by religious lectures. Whenever Navalar saw anywhere a glaring breach of Saiva observance, he condemned it unsparingly in leaflets and lectures.

### SAIVA EDUCATION

Having worked towards the removal of the abuses in Saiva religious observances, he proceeded to do constructive work by writing books on Saivism. His first catechism and second catechism give in a nutshell what every Saivite ought to know about his religion. He published them and sold them for a nominal price. It so happened that almost every Saivite who could read, got a copy of his first catechism, studied it and tried to follow it. This little book, more than anything else, shaped the life of the people and made them good Saivites. Every Tamil teacher made it a point to teach it. It thus found its way into almost every Saivite home. Children had

also to commit to the memory the Stotrams included in it. There was no one in those days who did not know the Stotrams of Vinayaka and Subramanya.

### RENOVATION OF TEMPLES

He attempted to renovate two ancient temples. There had been a Sivan Temple at Keerimalai, but somehow it had disappeared. He wrote a pamphlet about it and exhorted the public to rebuild it. There was a good response. He went to Keerimalai, inspected the place, found out the old site, and made a ground plan of the temple. He selected some Brahmin priests who undertook the work.

The other temple was Thiruketheeswaram, the site of which he made out from the Thevarams of Sambanthar and Sundarar. The temple had disappeared, and the site of the temple had lapsed to the crown. He applied to the Government for the sale of the site. But, Mr. Twynam, who was then Government Agent of the Northern Province, did not recommend the sale. He, therefore, made an appeal to the Saiva public as follows:

*"There are two Shivan Temples in Ceylon, which were sung by the Thevaram Hymnists. Thirugnanasambantha Moorthy Nayanar has sung a Thevaram in praise of Thirukonamalai. Thiruketheeshvaram was sung both by Sundaramoorthy Nayanar and by Thirugnanasambantha Moorthy Nayanar. This temple is at Matottam, which is very near Mannar, in the Northern Province. This is now in ruins, overgrown with jungle. How many temples are being built anew in Ceylon! How is it that you have not given your thought to this great and Sacred Temple! If every Saivite in Ceylon makes some contribution, however, small, towards it, what a big sum it will amount to! If all of you will ponder over this and build this sacred temple, that great Ocean of Love, Siva Peruman, will bestow His Grace on you".*

### CURBING TEMPLE ABUSE

He now directed his attention to the abuses in temples and mismanagement of some temples. He strongly condemned the slaughter of goats on the

car festival day. He was hard on the Saiva priesthoods of his time.

He always upheld the spirit and not the letter of the Agamas. While he recommends the regular performance of shraddha, he insists that the Brahmin who officiates or receives gifts must be learned, must be one who performs regularly his daily religious duties and does the ceremony with eagerness and devotion. Thevaram, Thiruvachakam and other works of Saints were regarded by him as the manifestation of God's Grace and as the nearest approach in Tamil to the Vedas and the Saiva Agamas.

### SAIVA RELIGIOUS PUBLICATIONS

He printed and published *Kanda Puranam*, *Periya Puranam*, and *Bharatham* for the benefit of his students learning Tamil literature. To *Periya Puranam* he added *Soochanam*, which explains the philosophy and psychology underlying the austere lives led by Saints spoken of in the *Puranam*.

### LITERARY WORKS

His literary works include the publishing of *Nighantu*, *Nannool*, *Thirukural* and *Thirukoviar* with commentary for each. He wrote a catechism of Tamil grammar and a concise Tamil grammar for the use of school children.

He was one of the earliest writers of prose literature. Most of those works before his time were commentaries. His prose style has received universal praise. *Peria Purana Vachanam*, *Thiruvilayadal Purana Vachanam* and *Kanda Purana Vachanam* were his chief prose works. The last of these is really a paraphrase of *Kanda Puranam*.

*Kanda Puranam* is undoubtedly a work of unique merit. The style is simple and the verses are eminently musical. Its similes far outdistance those of the works that can stand even second to it. It is encyclopedic. Saivism, Vedantism, Vaishnavism, Atheism, and even Materialism are there. It gives an account of the origin of the four Siva Moorthams, Vinayaka, Bhairava, Veerabhadra, and Subrahmanya. Ethics is taught in a practical manner. It speaks weapons of warfare unknown even to the

makers of the atomic bomb. Its greatest value is its religiousness, with which it is saturated. As every major literary work (*perunkkapiam*) is bound to give accounts of weddings, it relates the weddings of Siva and Subrahmanya. God has neither form, nor desires, nor need. To speak of a real wedding for God is therefore utter nonsense.

In his *Subrabodham*, Navalar explains the meaning of these weddings. When God starts the creation of the Universe, His aspect of Activity manifests. He is then seen in conjunctive with this Activity. This Activity is called Mother or Umadevi, and this apparent conjunction is what is called the wedding of Siva. This Activity has three forms, called Ichcha, Kriya and Gnana, which respectively control, activate, and enlighten the universe. Of these three, Kriya and Gnana are, according to *Kanda Puranam*. Deyvayanai Ammai and Valli Ammai respectively, and it is manifestation of these Shakthis that is represented as Subrahmanya's wedding with them. Similarly, *Periya Puranam* speaks of Sundarar's wedding with Paravaiyar and Sankiliar. Sundarar was called the Friend of God (*empiraan tholar*) and he could never be overcome by the fascination of the material body of a woman. The only relationship that Saints can have with other souls is that of a Guru. Sundarar saw that they were souls on the threshold of divinity, and took them on as his disciples. This act the author of *Peria Puranam* represented as the wedding of Paravaiyar and Sankiliar, in order to fulfill the requirement of a major literary work.

Navalar wrote commentaries on *Saiva Samaya Neri*, *Tirumurukattupadai*, *Koilpuranam*, and *Saiva Dharmottaram* which is a portion of the *Saiva Agama*, called *Sarvokta*.

He corrected the manuscripts of several works on grammar and literature for publication by others, the most notable of which was *Tolkappiyam* with Senavarayar's commentary.

### NAVALAR'S WORK IN INDIA

The press he owned in Jaffna was too small for his needs. He, therefore, went to Madras to do his printing work there, as paper and labour were also cheap. He bought a press, housed it, left it in

charge of his most loyal disciple, Sadasivapillai, and went to Chidambaram which was dear to him as his own place. It is the capital of the Saiva world. What Rome is to Catholicism, and Mecca to Islam. Chidambaram is to Saivism. Our Saints have called it *the Temple*. The name 'Koyil' by itself always meant Chidambaram. He therefore, established a school there and endowed it. Distinguished scholars like Sabapathy Navalar and Acharya Vetpillai presided over the school, and produced a large number of Tamil scholars. The annual income of the school from its endowments is about Rs. 25000.

### CHIDAMBARAM TEMPLE

The temple rituals at Chidambaram was not conducted according to the Saiva Agamas. The priests themselves were not true Saivites, as they never had Saiva Deeksha. Navalar was unable to persuade them to follow the Agamas. He, therefore, delivered a lecture in his school, pointing out the indispensability of Saiva Deeksha to the priests and the impropriety of the un-Agamic form of Puja performed by them. Instead of reforming them, this lecturer roused their anger. They had been treated by others as demi-gods. This denunciation was far too much to be borne by these embodiments of arrogance. A band of hirelings went to assault Navalar. But they were dispersed.

### CONFERRED THE TITLE OF NAVALAR

While in India, Navalar visited several sacred shrines and delivered religious lectures everywhere. When he was at Kumbakonam, the head of the Thiruavaduthurai Adheenam invited him to his Madam for the purpose of honouring him. The head of this Madam had all along been regarded as the spiritual head of the Saiva world. He received Navalar with great regard and love. At his request, Navalar delivered a lecture, and the head of the Madam, in order to honour him or rather to honour it, gave him the title of Navalar. He stayed there a few days, spending his time in reading rare Agamic works, not available anywhere else. Though he accepted the title, he would not accept anything tangible.

When he went to Ramnad, he was invited by the

Prime Minister of the Rajah of Ramnad to his palace. This invitation was very much similar to that of the head of Thiruavaduthurai. The Minister wanted to honour him. But, he was only a temporal prince, and Navalar had no regard for temporal power. He declined to go to him. Then, the Minister, who was also a great scholar, composed a stanza begging him to accept his invitation, and sent it through one of the palace vidvans. He consented to go to him, on condition that neither he nor any of his companions should be required to show any kind of respect that he might expect from them. The Minister treated him with very great regard and requested him to revise the manuscripts of several Tamil works for publication.

### NAVALAR RETURNS TO JAFFNA

Navalar returned from India in 1870, and did a good deal of literary work. Meanwhile, the Methodist school in Jaffna made an order that pupils should not wear Sacred Ashes. Most of the Saivite pupils disobeyed the order, and were, therefore sent out of the school. These pupils went to Navalar and requested him to open an English school. He immediately started one and maintained it from the fees paid by the pupils. Government refused to register the school for grant. The public did not give him any pecuniary help. The Mission school relaxed the order requiring pupils not to wear Sacred Ashes. The pupils also saw the disadvantage of studying in a school which was not recognized by the Government. The school had therefore to be closed after it had worked for four years.

In the year 1877, Jaffna was stricken by famine and cholera. He did some service in this connection.

### HIS LAST FEW DAYS

In July 1879, he delivered his last lecture in his school, on the Gurupuja day of St. Sundarar. At the close of his speech, he said that was his last lecture. On the 2nd of December of the same year, he fell ill. He was not able to perform his Siva Puja on the three following days. He got a priest to perform the external puja, and he himself performed the mental puja. On the last day, at about 8pm, he requested those present to sing Thevaram, wore Sacred Ashes and Rudraksha Mala, raised his hand to his head, and meditated on God. At about ten o'clock, he quitted his body. He was then 56 years and 11 months old.

### CONCLUSION

Navalar was a scholar, author, teacher and preacher, exemplar and reformer, mighty genius and indefatigable worker, lover of Tamil, lover of Saivism and lover of God. The Tamil land is yet to see another Navalar of similar calibre.

If not for the dedicated and selfless work of Arumuga Navalar, the great Saiva religion, Tamil language and culture would have gone into oblivion, particularly in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), by the intrusion of alien religion, language and culture. It is therefore, necessary that every Saivite should know this Saiva Tamil luminary whose name is held in high esteem all over the Saiva World of today.

Sir Muttukumaraswamy referred to Navalar as follows in a speech he made in the Legislative Council on 19th October, 1876:

*"He is one of those Orientals who can measure swords even with such a giant as my Honourable friend, the Queen's Advocate, in an argumentative way."*

## Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan

*A national figure with an international reputation*

### INTRODUCTION

Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan was described as a man of genius vision who from his early political career saw the light and having seen it, announced it with heroic courage and passionate persistence and having announced it worked for it with pertinacity and dedication, rare in the annals of leadership.

Mr K. P. S, a noted Indian diplomat and scholar hailed Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan as:

*'A national figure with an international reputation. His memory is well worth preserving, well worth cherishing, well worth handing down to our children and our children 's children as a precious heirloom.'*

A. E. Goonesinghe (1958) a noted labour and trade union leader, who heard Mr. Ramanathan's speech in the legislative assembly in 1915 said interalia:

*"No Sinhalese who had heard Sir Ponnambalam in defence of the Sinhalese people in the Legislative Council that day will ever raise his hand, or say anything against the Tamil race. The actions of Sinhalese in 1958 against the Tamils make me ashamed as a Sinhalese, and I decried them then and ever after. This hatred and contempt engendered by designing politicians against our brothers, the Tamils, must cease."*

### A TRIBUTE BY SARASIVA SANDARESA

1889

*'The Buddhists ... owe Dr. Ramanathan a deep debt of gratitude. His interest in the question of the Vesak Holiday and the Buddhists Temporalities Bill, his encouraging words to the Buddhists, students of Pali College and Theosophical Society, and a host of other services to Buddhism,*



*have endeared him immensely to the Buddhists of Ceylon"*

He did much for the Hindus. He had the Ponnambalvaneswarar Temple in Colombo, originally built and endowed by his father, renovated and rebuilt. He founded the Ramanathan College for girls and the Parameshvara College for the boys. He was the President of the Thiruvalluvar Maha Sabai in Madras – the leading Tamil cultural body of the time. He was considered the father of the Hindu Board of Education.

In 1994 Hon Lakshman Kadirgamar Minister for Foreign Affairs when delivering his memorial lecture in respect of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan said the

following in his opening lecture:

*"While I was reading about, and reflecting on, the life of Ponnambalam Ramanathan, I was overcome by a feeling of incredulity. It did not seem possible that one man could have had the audacity to attempt to do so much, let alone actually accomplish so much of inestimable value to the society in which he lived. But incredulity soon gave way to awe. There was nothing he did which he did not dignify; there was no position he held which he did not adorn; there was no cause he espoused which he did not ennoble."*

The list of tributes can go on but the above tributes and description would suffice to conclude that Ramanathan was, among the people of Ceylon, the epitome of the finest characteristic of leadership as of the race that begot him the nearest approach to the ideal of a Karma-Yo-Gin (man of action) as postulated by the political philosophers and sages of old. An orator par excellence and hailed as 'the silver tongued orator of the east.

### **HIS EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND**

Born in 1851, to an illustrious Jaffna Tamil family already highly distinguished in public service he chose to live not a life of ease and indulgence but a life of continuous service to society. His education at Royal College under Dr Boake, his undergraduate studies at Presidency College, Madras, under Dr Thompson, C. W. Thamothersampillai, his study of law under Sir Richard Morgan, his political apprenticeship under his uncle Sir Muthucumaraswamy, and his study of religion and philosophy under Arulparananda Swamigal, his spiritual 'Guru' were indeed a boon and shaped him to become a statesman and sage, scholar, jurist, author, philosopher and a man of religion, patriot and philanthropist, educational reformer and benefactor, idol of the nation, his versatility, was astounding. His life had a sweep of breathtaking majesty.

To crown all these came a great Navalur who in his death bed bequeathed the mantle of religion

and cultural leadership to his chosen disciple. He qualified as an advocate at the age of 22, practiced law in the considerable distinction.

### **PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER**

A handsome magnetic and masterful personality with a leonine courage and inexhaustible energy. A princely bearing, eyes brightened lustrous and a born leader. There are two aspects above many others, of Ramanathan's character and disposition that was striking. He was always in the vanguard of the great movements of the day – for constitutional, legislative, educational, social, political reform. He believed passionately in national unity. He was proud of his own people – the Tamil people – of whom he was quintessentially representative. But he cared deeply for all other races and communities that inhabit our Island home. In addition Ramanathan showed, throughout his life, at every turn, courage of the highest order – indomitable courage in the face of daunting odds and overwhelming obstacles. These qualities were never displayed by him more vividly than in his defence of the Sinhala people after the riots of 1915.

### **HIS POLITICAL CAREER**

In 1879, at the age of 28 he entered the Legislative Council as the nominated member to represent the Tamil speaking people in succession to his uncle Sir Muthucumaraswamy. Ramanathan's entry into public life in 1879 opened a new era in the political history of the Island for he imparted to the sovereign legislative assembly a new dynamism, a new vigour and enthusiasm, a new independence, a frankness and forthrightness of speech unknown and unheard of until this day.

The constitution of 1911 opened a new epoch in the political history of Ceylon. It promulgated the sovereign principle of popular participation in the Government of the state. The reformed legislature comprised of 23 members [previously 15] and of the 23, 13 were officials representing white bureaucracy and 10 were unofficials representing the people. Ramanathan was one of the elected member representing the educated Ceylonese.



## HIS ACHIEVEMENT AS AN ELECTED LEGISLATOR

As a legislator he achieved a great deal. In 1880, he moved that a Post Office Saving Bank be established. In 1880, he also moved amendments to the Road Ordinance of 1861, which was causing immense hardship and suffering to the people, because it required every adult male to offer free of all payment six days compulsory labour on roads, or pay commutation in cash. In 1887, he moved successfully that the Ordinance relating to the Registration of Title to Land be enforced which had lain unenforced for 18 years.

In 1885, he rendered a signal service to the Muslim Community by successfully opposing the passage of the Ordinance for the Registration of Muslim marriages which the Muslim Community found it offensive.

In 1885, he also did a great service for Buddhism by setting in motion agitation which secured the acceptance of Vesak Day as a national holiday – a brilliant speech by him ensured the enactment of the Buddhists Temporalities.

His other outstanding achievements and distinctions which need highlighting are as follows:

1. His work in the field of legal education was also outstanding. It was Ramanathan who was instrumental in reorganizing the entire scheme of legal education in 1888.
2. He was an author of considerable distinction. It is not perhaps widely known that in 1898 and 1902 he gave to the world two monumental volumes of Commentaries on St. Mathew and St. John. They are exhaustive, authoritative, and illuminating interpretations of the Christian gospel in the light of Gnanayoga. These books were widely acclaimed internationally. In 1906, he translated the Bhagavad Gita from Sanskrit into Tamil. In 1906 another work, the Culture of the Soul among the Western Nation, was published in New York.
3. His work on the establishment of a **National University** is widely acknowledged. A Hall of Residence at the Peradeniya Campus is named after him.

## MEMORABLE SPEECHES

It was in the legislature that Ramanathan rendered the greatest service to his country. On him fell the burden of defending the people of the country against the British Government.

He delivered a series of six memorable and passionate speeches, each one of feat of oratorical endurance, denouncing the ill – considered and high-handed measures taken by the Government to suppress the riots and the tyrannical and oppressive conduct of its officers.

It was a perilous time. The First World War was in progress and the British Government was rooted in the belief, however ill-founded, that the riots and disturbances were acts of calculated sedition designed to overthrow British rule. Freedom of speech and action were ruthlessly suppressed, and no man would dare speak against the Government without fear of grave personal danger. But Ramanathan was not overawed by such considerations, for never in his entire long and illustrious leadership did he think of safety first.

At this time Ramanathan was already over sixty. Age was taking its toll, but he was secure in his conviction that his cause was just. Through six long overnight sittings of the Council this great veteran of the thousand battles pounded away relentlessly while the perpetrators of those dastardly acts quailed before the force and fury of his arguments and bowed their heads in shame, powerless to counter them.

Ramanathan's second speech was a passionate plea for ending the horrors of Martial Law and the operation of Military Courts and for restoring the jurisdiction of the ordinary courts of justice.

In his third speech, Ramanathan summarized one hundred and twenty petitions presented in the Legislative Council complaining of the injustice and oppression committed by Government officers appointed to assess and apportion the damages owing to the riots.

In his fourth speech, Ramanathan moved for the appointment of a Select Committee of the Legislative Council to consider and to postpone the consideration of the Damages Bill until the

examination of the petitions was completed.

The fifth speech was a reply to the Attorney – General who opposed Ramanathan’s motion for the appointment of a Select Committee to consider and report on the grievances alleged in the petitions, and charged Ramanathan with living in an unreal world and having no sympathy for the Muslims who had sustained heavy losses. He, moreover, dismissed the petitions as specious and artificial, having no basis in truth and drawn by professional petition – drawers.

In his last speech, the sixth, Ramanathan opposed the Second Reading of the Bill to make provisions for the Levy of Compensation on all the Singhalese irrespective of whether they participate in the riots or not.

It is said these speeches of his, so daring, so challenging, and often so appealing, so rich in thought, so deep in learning, so overflowing with human emotion, moved, as few others before or since, the hearts of all lovers of liberty and light, of justice and kindly – dealing in man’s commerce with his fellow men.

### **THE TURN OF EVENTS – THE DONOUGHMORE CONSTITUTION**

In the closing years of a long and arduous life, Ramanathan was called upon to play a conspicuous role in one of the Ceylon’s most momentous events- The Donoughmore Reforms. The Donoughmore Commissioners formulated a novel constitution which transformed radically the political structure of the country.

The veteran statesman was now entering upon the penultimate period of his prodigious career. He was at the apex of his power and renown. He stood pre-eminent in the eyes of the nation; he enjoyed the applause, the confidence, even the adoration of multitudes. Yet at the height of his power and popularity, he was cruelly denounced and even disparaged by certain scheming and self seeking politicians who, enamoured of the splendid opportunities for power and self-aggrandizement that the new constitution offered to them, were completely oblivious of the larger and more abiding

interests of the country and of the demands of truth, justice, humanity, and fair-play in the Government of the state.

Ramanathan sincerely and passionately believed that the constitution despite its glossy veneer of democratic self-rule concealed in its wily bosom the seeds of national discord, disruption and ultimate decadence. It would hamper the country’s political growth and administrative strength; impede the ultimate attainment of national freedom and sovereignty. Ramanathan dreaded that the democracy formulated by the commissioners would degenerate into either anarchy or brutal tyranny masquerading as parliamentary democracy.

Ramanathan was passionately convinced that the Constitution was fraught with immense possibilities of national danger and disruption. Therefore from the outset he opposed it. Ramanathan was nearing the eightieth year of his life. With a fury and vehemence he challenged the propounders and promoters of the new Constitution. Ramanathan firmly believed that Ceylon would have to wait for many years before she could attain the ideal of successful universal suffrage. Ramanathan had another ground for opposing the constitution, He was extremely apprehensive of the future of the minorities whom the Commissioners sought to sacrifice at the altar of mathematical democracy. He therefore, advocated the retention of command representation until such time as, with the advance of education and the spread of a civilized national outlook voters could exorcize the demon of racialism and communalism, which has proved to be the gravest menace to man’s peaceful co-existence upon this planet.

It was a dark hour for the veteran statesman the darkest in all his long and illustrious leadership for many of his older colleagues who stood by him were either dead or superceded by new men who were not with him.

### **RAMANATHAN’S OVERSEAS MISSION United States of America (USA)**

On his mission to USA in 1905, he delivered his lectures entitled “The Spirit of the East and West”

before the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, U.S.A. at its opening meeting of the seasons of 1905–1906 and held the audience spellbound.

*“Mr Ramanathan is unquestionably a man of great wisdom concerning the deeper problems of life and man’s ultimate purpose under God. He is a great teacher one of those enlightened ones who see and feel God, one possessed with perfect love, the complete fellowship with God of the Apostle”.*

– Hon Charles H. Aldrich  
Ex-Solicitor General U.S.A

### His Trip to England, 1915

Left by ship on 30th October 1915. For the benefit of the British public and its rulers, he published the history of the riots under the title *Riots and Martial Law in Ceylon, 1915*. He got into close touch with leading Members of Parliament and other prominent personalities and gave the widest publicity to the foul misdeeds of their agents in the island. As a result of his representations, Ceylon hit the headlines in practically all the newspapers in England. Much popular indignation and resentment was aroused at the sensational happenings. Questions were asked in Parliament; the Governor and the Brigadier General were recalled immediately. Ramanathan said:

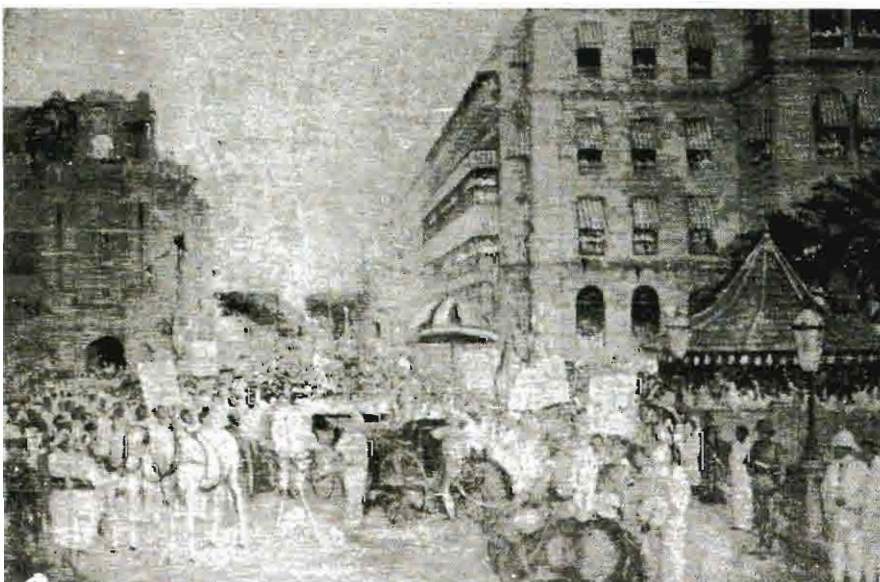
*“My protest in Council and the Colonial Office has borne good fruits.”*

The Singhalese people loved and honoured Ramanathan for he had served them with selfless gallantry and single-minded devotion in their hour of dire need. Mr (later Doctor) C. W. W. Kannangara, speaking of this aspect on Ramanathan’s service to the Singhalese people of said:

*“When the fair name of the Singhalese had been traduced, when the whole Singhalese race was about to be wiped out of existence by a muddle-headed Government, it was Ramanathan the Tamil, who raised his mighty voice and fought on behalf of the Singhalese. All praise be to him that he discharged his duty by his countrymen manfully. His name will ever be incised in the loving hearts of a grateful people.”*

Ramanathan’s return to Ceylon from England on 17th February, 1916 was marked by a uproarious acclamation and nationwide rejoicing. His return after having accomplished his mission, was greeted with a grand reception organised by the Singhalese leaders. He was taken in procession from the jetty to his residence in a decorated carriage. As the carriage was sailing majestically along the road to his residence, thousands of people who lined the road cheered and waved placards with such slogans as ‘Long Live the Ceylonese Member’, ‘Young Lanka welcomes the Grand Old Man of Ceylon’, etc. It was indeed a spectacular victorious procession.

In 1930, Ramanathan was again in England for



A grand reception organised by the Singhalese leaders greeted Sir P. Ramanathan upon his return to Ceylon from England.

the purpose of protesting against the introduction of the Donoughmore Constitution.

### Ramanathan's Visit to Malaya, 1924

In 1924, came Ramanathan's memorable visit to Malaya in fulfilment of a long-cherished desire on the part of the Malayan Ceylonese to meet their great national leader. The fame of Ramanathan's glorious services to the people of Ceylon had reached Ceylonese people in Malaya. He was their national idol, one to whom they could look up for succour in this hour of distress. On the 24th of February 1924, Ramanathan left the shores of Ceylon for Malaya, accompanied by Lady Ramanathan and Miss Ramanathan. In Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Capital, a huge meeting attended by nearly all the Ceylonese was held in the Town Hall. Similar meetings were held in other parts of the country. He was also accorded a royal reception honouring his visit to Malaya.

The editor of a leading journal, commenting on Ramanathan's visit to the Malayan Peninsula said:

*"The accounts of the cordial and royal receptions given to Hon. Sir P. Ramanathan by all communities in the Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States show in unmistakable manner how much his visit is appreciated and in what high veneration and esteem the Grand Old Man of Ceylon is held by the people in the Malay*

*Peninsula. We are sure that this visit of the great Tamil Knight...will be productive of much good to the peoples of the countries visited, especially to the Ceylonese..."*

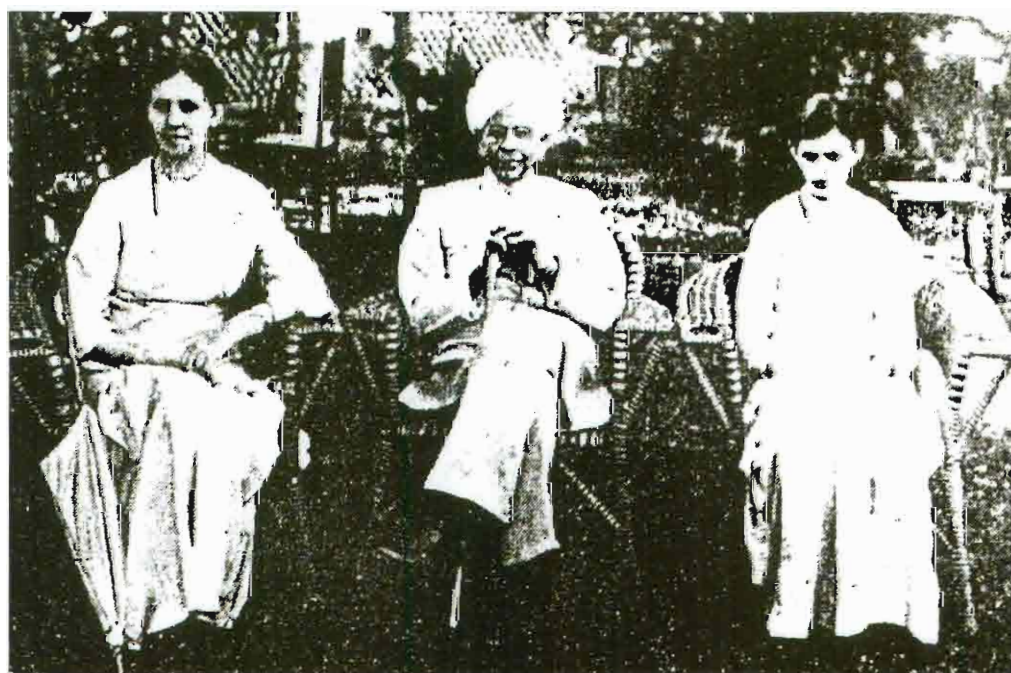
To facilitate Ramanathan's visit to the various places, a special train was placed at his disposal. Ramanathan addressed distinguished gatherings in important towns and cities and his speeches were listened to with profound admiration. His visit though brief, was immensely fruitful of good results.

He left Malaya in the last week of March 1924. On his departure, the Tamil community offered him a sum of fifty thousand dollars as an endowment to Ramanathan College.

### HIS LAST FEW DAYS

Ramanathan's last address was at the Ramanathan College where he addressed the Tamil leaders. He spoke in a voice charged with deep emotion. His opening words were:

*"Gentlemen, dangerous times are ahead of us" He proceeded, "The Donoughmore Commissioners have framed a constitution which will be the ruin of the country...I see before my eyes surging mob .... BEWARE, our future is in peril".*



Sir P. Ramanathan with Lady Ramanathan and Miss Ramanathan during their visit to Malaya in 1924.

His was the voice of Cassandra prophesying doom, when he warned his countrymen against the wisdom of accepting the constitution formulated by ignorant and self-opinionated foreigners whose sole motive was to create anarchy and chaos in a land where they were no longer wanted.

On 10th November 1930, Ramanathan contracted his last illness. Gradually he grew worse and the doctors who attended to him pronounced his condition serious. Ramanathan had a presentiment that his end was drawing near. For ten days, he remained in a yogic posture, without uttering a word, and his eyes were closed most of the time. His condition deteriorated further and he passed away in the early hours of the following morning, 30th November 1930. Lady Ramanathan, Ramanathan's children, his grandchildren and his nephews were all present at his bedside during the last moments. The 30th November was a day of intense national mourning, for there was never before anyone who had so completely won the hearts of the people of Ceylon. To commemorate the occasion, the Government declared a public holiday. All offices of Government, all schools, banks and business firms, the courts and the council chamber were closed to mourn the passing away of Ceylon's greatest national figure.

His Excellency the Governor, Sir Herbert Stanley sent the following message to Lady Ramanathan:

*"My wife and I are deeply grieved to learn of the death of our dear friend Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan I held him in the highest esteem as a legislator, orator, lawyer, educationist and scholar and above all, as a great gentleman.*

*He was one of Ceylon's most distinguished and patriotic sons and His loss will be deeply felt and sincerely mourned."*

The remains of Ramanathan were taken on procession from Sukhastan to the Fort Station and then by train from Colombo to Jaffna for his final resting place in Jaffna. As per his wish the body was laid in Samadhi in the premises of Ramanathan College. After a life time of toil in the service of man, the soul has found its final repose in the bosom of its creator.

### CONCLUSION

The death of Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan marked the end of a great era – acclaimed by many the greatest in the annals of the country's history in much the same manner as his entry into public life in 1879 when it marked its beginning. The great leader has lived his full span and was now a spent force, spent in fruitful and dedicated force service to his country and his fellow men – the honest and indefatigable public servant.

*"Worldly duties, if rightly done, will assuredly lead to the perfection of character and the attainment of the life spiritual in which frightfulness and disorder and hate have no place through the world. We must not be one set of principles prevailing the heart and another set pervading the lips. The lips should only speak what is in the heart, and nothing must be entertained in the heart that cannot be proclaimed by the lips".*

– Ramanathan

# Sivathamil Selvi Dr (Thiruchelvi) Thangammah Appacuddy

*A revered Saivite Sri Lankan leader who is also known as Golden Mother Superior*

## THANGAMMAH AND HER FAMILY BACKGROUND

Mr Appacuddy a respectable devout Hindu teacher and his orthodox wife Mrs Appacuddy blessed with three children were residing in one of the villages in Tellippalai.

Thangammah was born on 7th January 1925. Her parents brought her up with love and care. In 1929, she was enrolled as a student of the Nursery class in the American Mission School Mallakam and she moved up in stages. She passed S. S. G. (Govt Exam) in 1st Division as well as the entrance test for the Pundits examination when she was just 15 years old. At 16 years of age, she joined the Ramanathan Teacher Training College as a Trainee teacher and successfully completed the final examination at the Teacher Training College in thirteen subjects in 1944. Two years later she was appointed as a teacher and was teaching at St Cisiliya English School (Batticaloa). In 1949 she was transferred to Fatima Ladies College, Colombo and in 1952, she got through the Tamil Pundit Examination. Her saddest moments were when her beloved mother passed away in 1958 and her father in 1960. Consequent to the loss of her parents, domestic circumstances necessitated her to change her residence from Colombo to her homeland.

She applied for a transfer to a school in Tellippalai. On 6th July 1964 she assumed duty as a Tamil pundit cum Senior Teacher in Union College Tellippalai. Taking into consideration her qualifications, wide knowledge and vast experience in subjects like Hindu religion, Tamil language, culture, art and sociology, the College administration gave her a very responsible assignment.



## RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AFTER 1964

Outside school hours, she devoted her spare time delivering religious discourses both in Sri Durgadevi Temple as well as in other temples in that area. As the days rolled by to weeks and months, she got more involved in activities relating to the development of Durgadevi Temple, Tellippalai. The next item on her own programme for which she gave importance was to enlighten the people spiritually, culturally and morally by lecturing to them often, and also to render social assistance to the needy, as and when practicable. Her after school hours activities required commitment and time. She gave up her teaching career and retired on 31st December 1976 at the age of 51 years.

In 1976, she was elected as the Honorary treasurer of the Board of Sri Durgadevi Devasthanam Tellippalai and eventually moved up as President on 20th January 1977. Under her able leadership there were numerous temple development projects in the pipe line. As the temple projects were progressing, she resumed her mission of delivering religious talks and soul strengthening discourses, on invitations from temples, schools, organizations in and out of Jaffna district with enhanced frequency. Soon she was invited by private organizations overseas to deliver lectures especially from organizations in Tamil Nadu.

### RECOGNITION AND AWARD

During the 40 years of lecturing mission she had delivered thousands of lectures. In recognition of her valuable services, she was conferred the following awards:

- "Chenchot Chemmani" – awarded by Madurai Aadheenam Tamil Nadu (India) in 1960
- "Sivathamil Selvi" – awarded by Eelathu Chithamparam Karainagar in 1970
- "Thiruvacakondal" – awarded by Malaysian Ceylon Saivites Association in 1972
- "Sivagnana Vithakar" – awarded by All Ceylonese Hindu Federation Colombo in 1973
- Thurka Thuranthari" – awarded by Sri Durga Devi Davasthanam Tellippalai, 1973.
- "Kalasoori" (Kalaa Shoori) – awarded by the Government of Sri Lanka, 1991.
- "Doctor" – awarded by the University of Jaffna in 1998
- Governor's Award, 2003 at the 13th Annual Tamil Literary Festival of North East Provincial Education, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs Ministry
- "The Hindu Renaissance" on 13th August 2007. Award by 'Hinduism Today' and Kuai Aatheenam

The Hindu Renaissance Award Plaque says:

*"Presented by Hinduism Today to Dr Thangamma Appacuddy for her five decades of religious leadership of Sri Lankan Saivites. A brilliant*

*speaker, her spiritual talks at the home and abroad have been instrumental in inspiring the community to maintain their Hindu heritage and identity. A visionary who trained many to follow her footsteps, she has founded enduring institutions to help sustain Saiva Dharma for generations to come."*

In addition to the above, the Ministry of Justice, Sri Lanka awarded her the '**Justice of Peace**' title in 1982. Apart from being the holder of the foregoing titles, she had also been the author of sixteen Tamil books released between the years 1983 and 1998.

### TRIP TO UNITED KINGDOM

She also made a trip to United Kingdom and was there from 10th May 1987 to 4th July 1987. She went there on her mission delivering lectures, sponsored by various organisations. During her mission, she delivered a total of thirty three lectures in the 10 under-mentioned places:

1. London Wimbledon Pillaiyar Temple
2. London Uyarvasatkunru Murugan Temple
3. London Gnanananda Samajam
4. London Eastham Murugan Temple
5. East London Tamil School
6. West London Wembley & Town Hall
7. London Hindu Development Society
8. Eeling Gnanananda Samajam
9. Kenneth Sai Baba Hall
10. Blackburn Gnanananda Samajam

A few days after the return of her London trip, her health was slightly affected. The political situation in Sri Lanka necessitated the presence of Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Jaffna. This resulted in the restriction of free movement of the public and their activities. The IPKF returned to India in 1989 after a two year operation.

### WELFARE AND CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

On 7th January 1990 on the 65th birthday of Miss Thangammah a charitable fund 'Sivathamil Selvi Birthday Charitable Trust Fund' was inaugurated.

In 1992, the military operation and aerial

bombing of places in Jaffna caused a lot of damage, injuries and death. Tellippalai and its surroundings were not spared. Miss Thangammah went about on her mission to deal with rescue, evacuation and relief work. A great number of civilian population moved out in all directions to Thenmaradchy and Vadamadchy areas. Some even crossed Jaffna Lagoon and went to places like Vavuniya, Trincomalee and up country stations.

The Maha Kumba Abishegam of Sri Durga Devi Devasthanam took place on 7th September 1997. The notable feature during the festival was that the crowd was somewhat less because of the dispersal of civilians owing to the military operations.

Her overwhelming desire to help the deserving poor and destitute people, and contribute towards the welfare of the general public, and to uplift the downtrodden masses, had no barriers. The noble qualities of sympathy, mercy, pity, compassion and love towards the poor, as her activities would reveal, appear inherent and immanent in her, from her early days.

"Mahalirillam" to house female was ceremoniously opened on 31st January 1986. It is located towards the south east corner of the temple premises. The building was constructed at a cost of Rs 16 Lakhs. "Annaiyar Illam" was built to accommodate the elderly women.

#### **DHARMA SCHOOL FOR HINDU CULTURE**

In addition to the social service activities of Sri Durgadevi Devasthanam, Tellippalai, Sivathamil Selvi Dr. (Miss) Thangammah Appacuddy J. P, felt it necessary to educate the children of Durgapuram and its neighbourhood in Hindu religion and Tamil culture as otherwise there is a tendency for young children to go astray.

With this in mind, a Dharma school for Hindu religion and Tamil culture was opened on 21st January 2001 by Sivathamil Selvi Dr. (Miss) Thangammah Appacuddy J. P.

#### **DURGA MANI MANDAPAM NALLUR**

This building is located in Nallur. It was built and became operational on 10th April 1998. The building

was the solution to the multipurpose needs of conducting, alms giving, religious discourses, spiritual speeches, musical recitals, dramas, weddings and cultural meetings with taboo on political meetings. The hall can accommodate about 1200 persons.

#### **RECEPTION AND RELIEF CENTRE**

The Durgapuram temple complex also has two large sheds to accommodate temporary refugees, in case of sudden displacement of people from their areas, due to military operations or other unforeseen circumstances.

Her charitable deeds are not only confined to the poor, but are also spared to most deserving causes in Government and private institutions like hospitals, schools, colleges, temples, university, Ashramams, Aadeenam, libraries, Community Centers, Home for Children, Home for Elders, sports meet, prize-giving functions, and social functions etc.

The Temple Management was in need of its own printing press to save cost of printing expenses. The press to be used for the publication of books on religion, Tamil literature, grammar, biographies and school text books. The printing press was purchased on 10th April 1989 for a sum of Rs 1,100,000/-

#### **SIVATHAMIL SELVI SAIVA TAMIL RESEARCH LIBRARY**

The Jaffna Public Library was recognized as the best Library in South East Asia in 1980s. The pre-planned conflagration of this monument of literature by the beastly hooligans of the state in 1981, was a Himalayan loss to the country as a whole, and to the people of the North in particular. Consequent to its being reduced to ashes, Sivathamil Selvi Dr (Miss) Thangammah Appacuddy J. P. had a burning desire to provide this Tamil knowledge-hungry people with a Tamil Library for purposes of Tamil research and reference.

In pursuance of her wishes, she had been attempting to collect suitable books in the recent past. In response to her efforts, well-wishers from various parts of the country have sent valuable Tamil books in Literature and Religion.



## CONCLUSION

In 1971 and 1972 Ms Thangammah visited Malaysia and Singapore on a lecturing tour and delivered lectures in many places including Sri Kandaswamy Temple, Scott Road, Kuala Lumpur and she was awarded the title of 'Thiruvasakiakondal'.

In the management of Sri Durga Devi Devasthanam Tellippalai and its affiliations, Miss Thangammah, as a responsible president, ensured that there was absolute transparency in all her monetary dealings, for which she is finally responsible.

Sivathamil Selvi Dr (Miss) Thangammah Appacuddy J. P. is well known for her talents, intelligence, knowledge, experience, leadership, management skills, etc. A mere glance of the list of

the titles, awards, honours and tributes showered on her by various institutions, both in and out of Sri Lanka in recognition of Himalayan and humanitarian deeds will bear ample testimony to the indisputable fact that she is a superior lady.

She passed away on 15th July 2008, at the age of 83, having lived a life of fulfillment and having achieved all desired dream for the benefit of mankind. Undoubtedly Dr (Miss) Thangammah's unparalleled enthusiasm and humanitarian gesture were highly commendable and is an inspiration to everyone around her. She dedicated her life in the service of humanity and the whole of Sri Lanka was her home and all human beings were her brothers and sisters.



Miss Thangammah Appacuddy (seated) flanked by the writer's family members who visited Durgapuram, Tellippalai in February 2004.

# Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Thambiran Swamigal

*The founder of Nallai Thirugnanasambanther Atheenam*

## INTRODUCTION

The Nallai Thirugnanasambanther Atheenam in Nallur, Jaffna is the only Atheenam in Sri Lanka propagating Saiva religious and Tamil cultural activities as that of its counterpart Atheenams in South India. The Nallai Atheenam is located beside the famous and historic Nallur Kanthaswamy Temple or Nallur Kanthan.

The founder of this Atheenam is C. S. S. Mani Bhagavather who became the first head of the Atheenam and known as Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Thambiran Swamigal. The Saiva world famed and renowned lecturer cum singer conducts religious discourses in the form of story-telling lectures interspersed with songs. He has gone on a lecturing tour not only within Sri Lanka but also to India (Tamil Nadu), Malaysia, Singapore and United Kingdom. His lectures, with his melodramatic presentation keeps the audience mesmerised and spellbound. It is said that during his 45 years of lecturing stint from 1936 to 1981 he has delivered approximately 50,000 lectures which is indeed a remarkable achievement within the Saiva world.

## HIS EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

He was born on the 6th February 1918 to a Brahmin family of Anthanar lineage and was named Sivasubramani Iyer. His father was Chelliah Iyer and his mother Kanagambal. The parents brought him up under love and care. Mani Iyer was hyperactive and always found to be moving around and doing something useful. His early schooling was at the Vaitheeswara Vidyasalai. Early morning at 6.00am was his Sanskrit tuition and immediately after school session he rushes back home for English tuition.



Apparently he had inherited the talents of his grandfather in music, art and elocution. He had an inclination to attend religious discourses. He passed the school's public examination. His father wanted him to work in the Government service after completing his school career. With good results, he joined the Jaffna Hindu College. As he was growing up, his father who was monitoring closely his school performance, chose to give him freedom for his school activities. At the age of 18, his hidden talents in music and his flowing oratory became apparent and got the attention of his schoolmates and teachers. Soon he became involved in school dramas taking lead character roles. He also used to display his talents to students who gather around him.

## **PUBLIC DISCOURSES**

His maiden public discourse was sponsored by the Trustee of Vaitheeswarar Temple of Jaffna which was held at that divine temple. This was the beginning of C. S. S. Mani Iyer's committed and dedicated service to promote and enhance the knowledge of the Hindu Religion and Tamil culture. This yeoman service would continue for the next 45 years of his life time.

In 1940 at the age of 22, he got married to Yogambal and eventually they were blessed with a son whom they named Murukananda Sharma.

## **RECOGNITION AND AWARD**

His religious discourses (Kathaprasangam) were delivered with songs and lectures to the accompaniment of musical instruments. He soon became a knowledgeable and renowned lecturer. He was hailed as C. S. S. Mani Bhagavather which became a household name. He was often invited to deliver religious discourses by various temple management during their annual Mahotsavam and major festivals.

The management of Thaddatheru Sivasubramaniya Swamy Temple, in recognition of his excellent performance and committed service, presented him with a silk shawl. He was also accorded with the title 'Muthamil Mani'.

## **HIS NOBLE IDEA AND ASPIRATION**

C. S. S. Mani Bhagavather had always a desire to disseminate to the devotees the Saiva teachings in order to create a well informed Saiva community. He was also of the firm conviction that there should be a centre to institutionalise the Tamil and Saiva philosophy and the solution would be to establish an Atheenam.

He prayed to Lord Kanthan of Nallur and sought his blessing and accordingly the Lord appeared in his dream and said to go ahead and establish the Atheenam in Nallur and to rid of the troubles.

## **BECAME AN ASCETIC PERSON**

As the first move to achieve his aim he decided to become an ascetic person. In this respect, he

proceeded to Mathurai Atheenam, Tamil Nadu and expressed his wishes to Guru Maha Sannithanam Thiruvarul Thavayoga Sri-La-Sri Somasundara Sri Gnanasambantha Paramasaariya Swamigal and offered himself to be his disciple.

In the year 1966 in the month of Aadi (July/August), after a brief ceremony C. Sivasubramaniya Bhagavather was presented with the saffron coloured attire and rudraksha (sacred stringed beads worn by saints). He was then formally ordained and named Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Thambiran Swamigal.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF ATHEENAM**

On 6th August of the same year he established the Thirugnanasambanther Atheenam which occupied the premises located along a street near the Nallur Temple. In 1972, it moved to the present premises alongside the Nallur Kanthaswamy Temple. The main aim of the Atheenam is to propagate the Saiva philosophy and maintain it in its orthodox form.

Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Thambiran Swamigal (C. S. S. Mani Bhagavather) became the first head of the Atheenam. Under his leadership and management, the centre was in full operation with Saiva classes and activities. Sri-La-Sri went on with his Kathaprasanga (story telling) lectures which was aimed to educate the followers in Saiva philosophy and Tamil culture. He has been on this mission for 45 years.

## **HIS LAST FEW DAYS**

He delivered his last lecture at the Vannai Sri Kamachi Ambal Temple. On his return after that lecture, he felt tired and weary and became unwell. A few days later on 10th April, 1981 Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Thambiran Swamigal formerly known as C. S. S. Mani Bhagavather passed away. He was sixty three years old. His departure from this world was not without fulfilment. He had achieved his mission by rendering his dedicated service to the Saiva community and was on his journey to attain eternal bliss.

On the following day (11th April 1981), after lying-in-state the remains was laid to rest in Samadhi beside the centre. The site of burial is the location

of the present Nallai Aatheenam Guru Moortha Temple.

He is succeeded by Sri-La-Sri Somasunthara Desika Gnanasambantha Paramasariya Swamigal who is currently the head of Atheenam.

## CONCLUSION

The mission of Sri-La-Sri Arumuga Navalar, who hails from Nallur, the city of ancient Jaffna Kingdom, had been continued by C. S. S. Mani Bhagavathar. He preached and spread the Saiva religion and Tamil culture through his story-telling cum singing mode. The dissemination of knowledge about religion and culture was not confined to Jaffna but also to other

parts of Sri Lanka and overseas.

In paying a tribute to Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Thambiran Swamigal. His holiness Thavathiru Kunrakudi Adigal wrote a message and an extract of his message in Tamil duly translated to English is appended below:

*“Under the grace and management of the revered Head of the Aatheenam Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Tambiran Swamigal was able to instil and educate the devotees by means of his melodious voice and story-telling religious discourses in Muthamil mode (Eyal, Esai and Naadakam) in order that the Saiva teachings spread to the devotees of the Saiva world.”*

## Saint Yogaswami

*The most renowned 20th century spiritual Master, a Sivagnani and a Natha Siddhar revered by both Hindus and Buddhists*

### INTRODUCTION

Jnanaguru Siva Yogaswami of Jaffna is a great saint of universal love, a true siddhar in whom love that is verily God blossomed forth in all its perfection. He is held in deep veneration as the Light of Truth. He lived in the simplest and the humblest manner, a man among men, but with a halo of purity

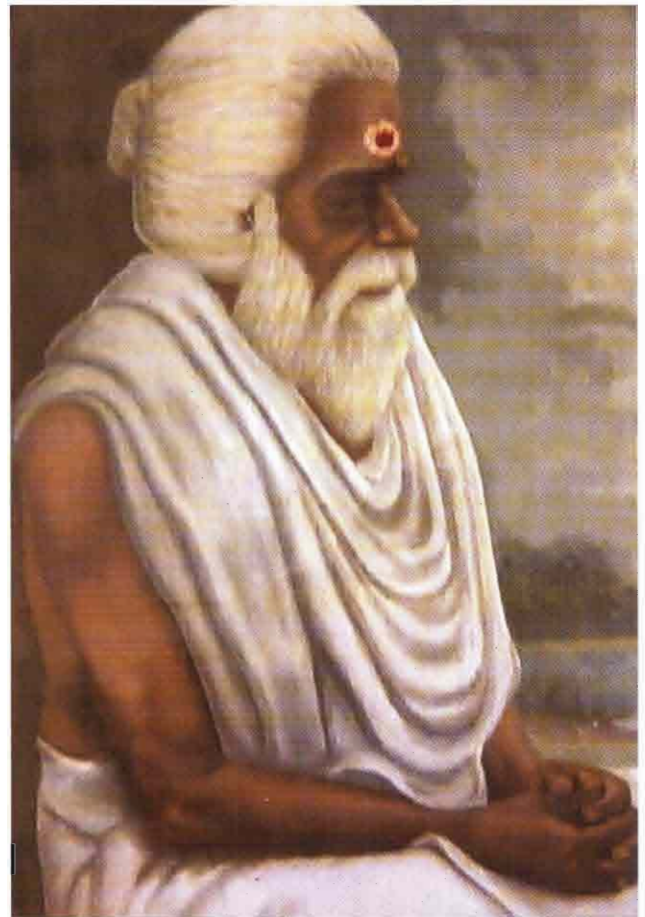
*“St Yogaswami who shed that spiritual light showed the Path towards Self Realisation to his devotees principally through his sublime songs-called ‘Natchintanai’ (Good Thoughts) – which are veritable treasures of thoughts and of language”*

– V. Siva Supramaniam,  
President, All Ceylon Hindu Congress, 1972.

In her book entitled *Saint Yogaswami and the Testament of Truth* (Birth Centenary Memorial Edition – 1872 to 1972), the author Mrs Ratna Chelliah Navaratnam has with a fine sensibility dwelt on Swami’s magical play or leela of the one – as the one and many, as the immanent and the transcendental, as the world and the beyond, as the Absolute and the relative as the joy and the sorrow, all somehow harmonized in that whole Supreme – Muluthum Unmai (All is Truth).

### HIS EARLY LIFE AND FAMILY BACKGROUND

His name was Sadasivam. He was born in a Saivite family on 29th May 1872 in the village of Maviddapuram off the northern coast of Jaffna. His parents – Mr Ambalavananar and Mrs Amudam. His mother passed away when he was about 10 years old. He was then raised by his paternal aunt named Muthupillai.



He was not interested in his studies at school. As he grew up to be a young adult, he vowed himself to celibacy and renounced a place in his father’s business because it did not allow him time to meditate and study the scriptures.

In 1889, Swami Vivekananda visited Jaffna and made a deep impression on the 18 year old Yogi. The next day Yogaswami attended Swami Vivekananda’s public speech. Swami Vivekananda began his address with “The time is short but the subject is vast.” This statement went deep into Yogaswami’s psyche. He repeated it like a mantra to himself and spoke it to devotees throughout his life.

In 1890, Yogaswami found a job as a storekeeper for an Irrigation project in Killinnochchi. Here he lived like a yogi, often meditating all night long. He demanded utter simplicity and purity of himself as he would later, of his disciples.

### YOGASWAMI'S GURU

In 1905, Yogaswami found his Guru, Sage Chellappa\*. The Guru and the disciple met at Nallur Theradi. The Guru initiated Yogaswami into spiritual life and directed the disciple to enquire his ownself and examine his inner self and expel his attachment. Yogaswami revered his Guru, Chellappa Swamigal as much as Lord Siva. Yogaswami gave up his job and everything else, in order to follow Chellappa Swamigal for the next five years. Soon his life became filled with intense spiritual discipline and severe austerity. Following Yogaswami's ordination, his Guru sent him away. Chellappa Swamigal died in 1911. Chellappa Swamigal showed Sri Siva Yogaswami the way of bliss and made him attain through his grace, wisdom and joy.

A great spiritual Guru from 1911, during the next 40 years, Yogaswami spent years of intense tapas under the olive tree at Colombuthurai Road on the outskirts of Jaffna. In his outward behaviour, Yogaswami followed the example of his Guru. During the passage of time, more and more devotees gathered around him. He evolved as a great spiritual guru. He used his immense spiritual power to serve the society. His services had no limits. He guided the people in all the fields such as politics, education, welfare and religion. Devotees would come to him for help with all their problems. He could read people's mind and evaluate their spiritual growth and guide them.

### HIS CONTRIBUTION

Yogaswami conveyed his messages through over 3000 poems and songs called 'Natchintanai' (Good Thoughts). The genesis of 'Natchintanai' is that it unravels the profound fount of grace, wisdom and love that flowed from the lofty Seer of Columbuthurai. In the language of the heart, Yogaswami kindles the flame of Truth recollects in

tranquility the intimations of Grace transmitted to him by his Guru, Sage Chellappa Swami of Nallur. Natchintanai has been published in several books and through primary outlet and an archive of his teachings.

In December 1934, he launched the monthly journal of 'Sivathondan' meaning both servant of Siva and 'service to Siva'. This had resulted in increase of his followers.

### HIS LAST FEW YEARS OF HIS LIFE

In 1961, the 89 year old Yogaswami had an accident fracturing his hip and was in hospital for a few months, thereafter he was in wheelchair. He continued meting out his wisdom and guidance throughout his final few years. At 3.30am on Wednesday 24th March 1964, he attained videhamukti at the age of 91. The whole nation of Sri Lanka mourned his departure (Mahasamadhi) and devotees thronged to Jaffna to bid farewell to the great saint and spiritual leader.

### DISCIPLES

Among the thousands of devotees of Sivayogaswami, the following four disciples followed his path:

- Markanda Swamy who was a staff in the Department of Survey, Sri Lanka and then later he stayed at Kaithady Ashram.
- Chellathurai Swamy, who was a school principal and later became a disciple of Yogaswami.
- Santhanaswamy, who was the son of Lord Viscount Soulbury, who was the last Governor-General of Ceylon during the British colonial period. His original name was James Ramsbotham and had a Masters degree in Philosophy. He dedicated his life in realizing the truth and followed Yogaswami's path.
- Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, a young enlightened American in search of his guru. Yogaswami gave him the name Subramuniya and initiated him into the holy orders of sannyasa and ordained him into his lineage. Sri Sivaya Subramuniya Swami (kauai) attained Samaadhi recently.

## CONCLUSION

Though Saint Siva Yogaswami comes from the lineage of Siddhars, he nurtured the tradition of the Vedas and Agamas. Yogaswami considered that there is no equivalence, either in Tamil or in other languages, to Sivapuranam in aiding one in his/her religious practice and accomplishment. He encouraged the recital of Thevaram, Kanthapuranam and Periapuranam and the learning of the Siddhanta Sastras. The author of Periyapuranam too testifies, that the enlightened fraternity of the votaries of Siva fosters goodwill and harmony and promotes benevolence in this world.

Yogaswami loved everyone alike, so much so that everyone felt his presence with the faith that he himself was the special object of affection. This was because he had realized his oneness with all beings and immortalized the oneness by his overflowing love and grace.

*“Even when Yogaswami was alive he had considerable reputation in Ceylon and India*

*as a truly enlightened sage. His devotees naturally tended to exaggerate his spiritual accomplishments. He had been hailed the greatest seer the world had known since Shankara. There were skeptics who dismissed him as just another yogi with psychic powers. Even those who questioned whether he had been fundamentally transformed in the spiritual sense did nevertheless readily concede that he had extraordinary psychic powers. Yogaswami was reputed to have been remarkably clairvoyant. He was known to disappear from one place in space and reappear at several places at the same time. Three of his devotees claimed to have met him at the same moment in time in places as far distant as Jaffna (Ceylon), Madras and London. One of his close friends recalled incidents which illustrated that anything wished by Yogaswami immediately materialized.”*

– HOMAGE TO YOGASWAMI

By Susunage Weeraperuma  
London 1970

### \* Chellappa Swami of Nallur

In the mid 19th century, Vallipuram of Vattukottai married Ponnamma of Nallur and they were blessed with five children and Chellappa was one of them. He had his secondary education in English medium. He discontinued his studies after a few years and commenced his employment with the Jaffna Kachcheri. Though he was praised and trusted by Englishmen, his strange behaviour was an enigma to many.

Though Chellappa enjoyed the high prestige of a privileged past, he was not enamoured by it. He was ever dwelling on the inner kindling of his being. Irresistably drawn towards gnanam or spirituality, there appeared changes in his habits, attire and movements. When ascetic inclination overwhelmed his mind, Chellappa renounced the world totally. To the masses, he was a mad man. To the great men who wish to redeem their souls, he was a saint. His narrow face on the frame of his thin body bloomed like a flower, spreading the spiritual fragrance.



## The Jaffna Public Library

*A Library which was a repository of important texts and invaluable manuscripts in the glorious and noble Tamil heritage Superior*



A book entitled *The Jaffna Public Library Rises from It's Ashes* was compiled by Mr V. S. Thurairajah furnishing details regarding the inception, growth, the destruction now and then and the final restoration of the Jaffna Public Library.

Mr V. S. Thurairajah, an architect by profession, has made significant contributions to the field of Architecture for the past forty years and has a string of qualifications and wide experience. He functioned as the 'Chairman of the daily newspaper EELANADU, published in Jaffna, Sri Lanka, 1973–1975.

The 92 pages book of the Jaffna Public Library traces the humble beginning and its course up to the current time, with photographs and architectural

drawings and plans.

According to the book, way back in 1933, one learned gentleman, named K. M. Chellapa provided the facilities for reading in his house by placing a few newspapers and publications in one of the rooms in his house. He allowed everyone to come to his house to read without paying any fee.

Owing to overwhelming response he established a small library at his house and named it 'Lanka House'. Thus the seed was sown for the germination and eventual blooming of a grand Jaffna Public Library – the pride of the people of Jaffna.

The book also mentions about the realisation of Mr Chellapa's vision to establish a free Central



Tamil Library with a formation of a committee. The committee worked tirelessly and collected books periodicals and ancient valuable documents. The committee emphasised that these old documents were proof of an ancient cultural heritage of the Tamils and should be preserved.

On 1st August 1934 the library moved into a more spacious location along Hospital Road. A year later the library came under the Urban District Council. Another year later the library moved to Abu Bakar Building, Main street, Jaffna.

The Urban District Council of Jaffna was eventually elevated to Municipality status which in the year 1949 decided to build a modern spacious building near the Council building, in the style of Dravidian architecture reflecting the culture and tradition of the local people and also to meet the international standard.

Large amount of funds was needed and towards this various fund-raising activities were carried out. There was good response from members of the public and well wishers. Contributions were also received from the American Embassy and Indian High Commission.

The first stage of the building construction was completed and officially commissioned on 11th October, 1959. The library then moved into the newly constructed building and books started pouring in by the thousands from well-wishers, foreign embassies and charitable organisations.

Soon the library became full-fledged and functioned in a well-organised manner meeting the international standards. The Library was considered as one of the finest in South East Asia.

It is being stated in the book that *"This library stood as a veritable treasure house of knowledge imparting wisdom to all without distinction of race or religion."*

The book also moves on to the next episode of the library and narrates about the tragedy that struck on 01.06.1981 when the Jaffna Library was set on fire by arsonists and within minutes the entire building was in flames. Thus *"the priceless treasures collected during half a century of toil and dedicated effort has been reduced to ashes."*

The Municipal Council of Jaffna, having



Damages to the Jaffna library

deliberated on the tragedy and its effect on library building, decided not to repair the building but to allow it to remain as *"a grim testimonial to savage and bestial tendencies of communal hate."*

A replica of the burnt building was constructed behind the original (burnt) building. Construction work commenced on 7th February 1982 and the new building duly completed was commissioned on 4th June 1984.

The Library started functioning in the newly constructed building. Hardly six months has passed when tragedy struck again. But this time the damage was not caused by fire but by bullets, shells and rockets of the savage war. It was decided to renovate the damaged building and accordingly the renovation works was completed in January, 2002.

While retaining the external appearance and feature of the classical Dravidian architecture, the interior of the Library need to be refurbished with modern facilities meeting the international standard.

The Jaffna Public Library is now functional and the credit goes to the Architect Mr V. S. Thurairajah and his team for their commitment and untiring effort to ensure that the library is functional.

The book also indicates that the proceeds of the sale of this book will form the nucleus of a fund to be floated for microfilming the valuable documents in the Jaffna Public Library. The book is available for purchase at the Jaffna Public Library for Rs1,000/- per copy. Let us all support the Jaffna Public Library in order that the microfilming project is successful.

# The Nallai Thirugnanasambanthar Aatheenam

*The Organisation that supplements and complements the services and functions of Temples*



## INTRODUCTION

Saivism is one of the six cults of Hinduism. To fulfill the spiritual and cultural needs of the Saivites, temples have been built from time immemorial. Aatheenams complement and supplement the service and functions of temples. The earliest of these Aatheenams is the Madurai Thirugnanasambanthar Aatheenam in India founded by Saint Thirugnanasambanthar himself in the Pandyan capital of Madurai, Tamil Nadu in the 6th century AD. The latest is the Nallur Thirugnanasambanthar Aatheenam of the Temple city of Nallur, Jaffna, Sri Lanka. It was established on 6th August 1966 and occupied a house along

the road to Nallur Kandaswamy Temple. The Aatheenam was headed by Sri-La-Sri Swaminatha Thambiran Swamigal. Formerly he was known as C. S. S. Manibhagavather and Pulavar Mani. He was an ardent devotee of Lord Murugan.

In 1972 the Aatheenam moved to the present premises, which is very close to the Nallur Kandaswamy Temple. In a way what are Abbeys of Christianity, so are Aatheenams to the Saiva cult.

Swaminatha Swamigal or Pulavar Mani has travelled extensively including Malaysia where he had conducted talks and lectures which attracted a very large crowd of Hindu devotees. He has also



delivered talks and religious discourses at the Sri Kandaswamy Temple, Scott Road, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He passed away on 10th April 1981, at the age of 63. The successor and current leader is Guru Maha

Sannithaana Mahathaana Sri-La-Sri Somasundara Desikar Gnanasambantha Paramasriya Swamigal.

### LOCATION

The Nallur Aatheenam or 'Nalaiyampathi' is often described as a sacred place owing to its strategic location within the precincts of the Nallur Kandaswamy Temple. It is located to the West of the Temple and on East is the view of Guru Moortha Temple and to the North is the view of Kalamandapam (Hall).

### FUNCTIONS OF NALLUR AATHEENAM

The functions of the Aatheenam are as follows:

- Daily Pujas: (Rituals and ceremonies with flower offerings to the Saiva deities and the founder)
- Conduct of various classes, courses and instructions. These courses help to develop the body, mind and spirit of every Saivite irrespective of the age and social background he/she comes from. They include the 'Yogaasana Classes, Pannissai (devotional) music classes, pre-school, needle work and home science classes.
- Guru Pujas: They are celebrations to commemorate the attainment of Mukthi of the four Saints of the Saiva cult. These saints include Appar, Sambanthar, Suntharar and Manickavasagar whose 'Thevarams' and 'Thiruvacakams' form the bedrock of the devotional music of Saivites.
- Welcoming and extending hospitality to visitors coming from South Sri Lanka and from overseas. This is done so with the intention to

promote inter-communal and inter-religious unity and to foster goodwill and understanding at the international level.

- Organising and conducting functions connected with holy days and festivals which are sacred to the Saivites. They include the Thai Ponggal, Hindu New Year, Sivarathiri, Navarathiri and several other religious festivals.

### FUNCTIONS OF THE GURU MAHA SANNITHAANAM

*(The Chief incumbent of the Nallai Aatheenam)*

The function of the Chief incumbent is as follows:

- Visiting the various parts of Sri Lanka and the countries of the world to participate in religious functions, to deliver religious discourses and to offer blessings.
- Initiating Theeksha ceremonies (These are a sort of participation/ordination ceremonies to uplift a Saivite especially of the laity and to make him holy. In these ceremonies the smearing of the Thiru Neeru (holy ash) on the forehead, torso and the arms of an individual is an important aspect.
- Initiating formal education to pre-school children (Vythyarambam). It involves teaching and learning – reading and writing of the alphabets.
- Preaching the tenets, rules and regulations of the Saiva cult.
- Giving alms on a mass scale during the festival seasons of the Nallur Kandaswamy Temple.

### CONCLUSION

In the Southern part of the Indian sub-continent there are several Aatheenams notable among them are the Madurai, the Thirupananthaal, the Tharmapuram and the Thiruvavaduthurai Aatheenams. The Aatheenams have gone into research in the field of rituals and religion and often advice and assist Temples authorities and other Hindu based organizations when clarifications are sought on religious matters.

## The Jaffna Tamil Kingdom at Nallur City: A Trail of Antiquity

*Era of the Ariya Kings*

If you are planning to go on a tour to Jaffna, Sri Lanka, then a visit to Nallur, a small town located about 3 kilometers from the exuberant town of Jaffna, is a must in your tour itinerary. Nallur is steeped in history and the relics of the Tamil Kingdom that had once stood tall and proud, has an interesting story to tell.

From Jaffna town take Point Pedro Road, Jaffna on a Northeasterly direction the road will take you to the historic Nallur Kandaswamy temple which is about 5 km from Jaffna town. On the way nearing the temple, the 'Manthiri Manai' (minister's abode) could be seen on the right hand side of the road. Proceeding further along the road for about 500 metres one cannot miss the archway, entrance to the royal palace, located in 'Sankili Thoppu'. Though the King's palace has been destroyed by enemy invasion, the remains – the archway to the palace still stands on the left side hugging the Point Pedro Road. The façade shows much wear and tear and now it is sheltered by a roof. The legendary 'Yamuneri' tank is located within the vicinity of Sankili Thoppu.

Almost reaching the Nallur Kandaswamy temple, one cannot miss the gold painted statue of King Sankili II, the last King of Jaffna seated atop a steed dressed in the attire of a valiant king seen with his left hand gripping the hilt of the sword. There is a plaque fixed below on the mounted column. The inscription in Tamil reads:



Manthiri Manai

*'In conjunction with the Silver Jubilee celebration of Jaffna City Council, this statue of King Sankili is constructed and unveiled on 24/11/1974. The statue was given a facelift on 10/08/1994.'*

Standing beside the statue facing the westerly direction one would have a general view of the revered 'Nallur Kandaswamy Temple'

Looking at the present Nallur town environment,

it is hard to imagine that Nallur was at one time, a focal point for 'Singhai Nagar' or city of 'Singhai'. It was indeed a vibrant city and the Tamil Sangam which constituted of scholars not only from the Chola, Pandya and Thondai countries but from Eelam as well. The city of Nallur, during the rule of Tamil Kingdom, was a hive of activities, where literary persons, artists and poets came to entertain the King in the court. According to cultural practices of the day, there were many religious and cultural buildings and places adjoining the temples in the Nallur area.

According to 'Yaalpana Vaipavamaalai" the first Tamil King was Ariya Chakravarthy, known in local tradition as 'Singhai Ariyan'. The period of rule of the Ariya Chakravarthy Kings was from 1242AD to 1620AD and a total of 19 Kings ruled the Jaffna Kingdom during this period. They ruled the Jaffna Kingdom with alternating throne names of 'Pararajasekaran' and 'Segarajasekaran'. After the rule of the 11th king i.e. Kanaga Sooriya Singhai Ariyan (1440–1450 & 1467) under the throne name 'Segarajasekaran IV' the 'Ariya' suffix ceased to be used by the remaining 8 Kings. The eighth King was King Sankili Kumaran Segarajasekaran. The year 1621 saw the end of the Jaffna Kingdom and its rule. The Portuguese invasion resulted in the capture of Sankili Kumaran and his family. They were taken captive to Goa where King Sankili was decapitated. Thereafter, the Portuguese ordered that the title of 'King' must no longer be attached to the names of members of the royal family, and that they be known by their caste name of 'Mudali'. They divided the Jaffna Kingdom into four regions and appointed four Maathakams (officials from the army). Having brought the people under control in accordance with the Portuguese desires, these four Maathakams exercised authority over the people.

Having said in brief about the Tamil Kingdom at Nallur city let us go back to the relics that are now seen around the Nallur of today.

### MANTHIRI MANAI

It is said that Manthiri Manai or Minister's abode was, at one time the residence of Paranirupasinghan who

accepted the position of Minister offered by King Sankili Segarajasekaran (Sankili 1). Some historians assert that 'Manthiri Manai' was partly the King's palace. Paranirupasinghan was said to be a man of immense military prowess and is also a physician of unparalleled skill.

The minister's abode was a building of the 15th century built of stones, rubbles and masonry. The wooden pillars have intricate carvings. A well can be seen within the building and it is said that there is a tunnel (now disused) that leads to the Yamuneri tank. To the rear of the building is a man hole which is about 3 feet in depth and appears to be choked with debris and rubbish.

It is also said that the Dutch government had occupied the building for a brief period during their rule. They carried out some renovation to afford better protection.

### SANKILI THOPPU

The royal palace was built in an area called 'Sankili Thoppu'. Adjacent to this area was the water-tank called 'Yamuneri'. There were at one time important buildings around this area such as minister's palace etc. and importantly the 'Muthirai Chantai' – an area where Nallur Kandaswamy temple stood. Historical



Archway to Palace



Yamuneri tank

records reveal that the original temple was built by King Vijayakalingan's minister named Buvanekavahu in 1248. It stood where the Christian Church is presently located at Muthirai Chantai.

### **YAMUNERI TANK**

The Yamuneri Tank (Yamuna + eri) is located near the former Kandaswamy temple and it is said a tunnel links this place with 'Manthiri Manai'. The tank was built by King Singhai Pararajasekaran (1478–1519). He built a stone-cased tank and filled it up with sanctified water from the sacred Yamuna River, India. Currently, the tank appears to be in a state of neglect.

### **THE STATUE OF KING SANKILI II**

King Ethirmana Singha Kumaran ascended the throne in 1591 and died in 1616. He was succeeded by Sankili Kumaran Segarajasekaran. He was called King Sankili II as there was another Sankili (Sankili Segarajasekaran) who was referred as Sankili I and

ruled Jaffna from 1519–1565.

King Sankili II and the previous five other Kings in the lineage faced a common problem. They were unable to establish a firm rule over Jaffna owing to the political intervention by the Portuguese who were out to take hold of Jaffna. The Portuguese armies made two attempts to attack Jaffna but were thwarted by the Tamil army. However, for the third time in the year 1591, the Portuguese attacked Jaffna. The Battle took place at the area between Nallur Kandaswamy temple and Veeramma Kaliyamman temple and the Tamil army was defeated. The Portuguese enthroned Ethirmana Singha Kumaran and upon his death Sankili II ascended the throne as mentioned earlier. He was also known to the Portuguese by the name of 'Ceyanker'. During the period of his rule, the Portuguese threat was in existence. The final invasion by the Portuguese took place in 1620 and the Tamil army was defeated.

King Sankili II and his family were taken as captives to Goa, where the Jaffna King was decapitated.

Thus, in 1620 the nineteenth King Sankili II was the last King to rule the Jaffna Kingdom thereby terminating the Dynasty of the Ariya Chakravathys'.

King Sankili I mentioned earlier is the most remembered of all the monarchs of the Jaffna Dynasty. He is regarded by the people as a hero who had fought with the Portuguese till the very end, never allowing them to rule Northern Lanka and thereby protecting the independence of the Jaffna Kingdom.

In the 'Yaalpanam Irachiyam' (historical record) King Sankili I is described as a valiant monarch who was a patriotic leader and a ruthless far-sighted ruler. However, some historians do not speak satisfactorily of King Sankili I.

### NALLUR KANDASWAMY TEMPLE

The present Nallur Kandaswamy temple is located in the Kurukkal Valavu – a place where the original Nallur temple was housed and in the adjacent lands were temples for Ganesha, Shiva and Shakti.

In 1450AD, General Sembaha Perumal from Southern Sri Lanka conquered the Tamil Kingdom. The palaces and other important buildings in Nallur were destroyed and it is believed that the Kandaswamy temple was also destroyed. However in 1467, General Sembaha Perumal tried to make amends by building the Kandaswamy temple in Muthirai Chanthai. The temple's eternal walls were built adjacent to Yamuneri Tank.

In 1620, the invading Portuguese occupied the colossal temple building with lofty walls which afforded protection. The temple was later destroyed to the grounds.

In 1658, the Dutch captured Jaffna from the Portuguese. Under the Dutch rule policies towards Hindu religion was somewhat relaxed during the latter part of their rule.

In 1734, permission was obtained from the Dutch Government to construct a small 'madalaya' style building i.e. without gopuram in the second Nallur Temple (Muthirai Chanthai). Later, due to the efforts of an influential person named Raganatha Mappana Mudaliar, permission was granted to build the Nallur Kandaswamy Temple in its original site in Kurukkal



Statue of King Sankili II

Valavu. Due to the previous incidents, a simple style was chosen rather than the conventional type of temple. Eventually, through passage of time under the British rule, the temple building with the required facilities were added and upgraded. The temple also acquired the lands of the surrounding areas.

Today the temple stands majestically bordered by Point Pedro and Temple Roads. The temple faces the East and exhibits an ornately crafted façade with a 5-tiered front Gopuram, 6 bell towers, Gopuram at the entrance to Arumugaswamy and temple high wall with white and red coloured red stripes.

Your tour of Nallur area is not complete without the visit to the four ancient temples built in the four directions of the former Nallur Tamil Kingdom. They were built by Kulasegara Singhai Ariyan known under the throne name of King Pararajasekaran I (1262–1284AD).

The four temples are as follows:

- North - Saddanatha (Nallai Nathar) Temple
- East - Veyilugantha Pillaiyar Temple (the first of

the 4 temples built)

- South – Kailaya Natha Pillaiyar Temple (for his personal worship)
- West – Veeramma Kaliaman Temple

All these four temples are within a two kilometer radius from the Nallur Kanthan and mostly located along Point Pedro Road.

### THE KINGDOM OF JAFFNA SHOWN IN THE EARLY MAP

Mapmakers of ancient days produced maps at an age in which much of the world beyond Europe was unexplored or unknown. Therefore mapmakers were liberal in their interpretation and were creative in their embellishment.

The island of Sri Lanka was portrayed as a shapeless lump with depictions of elephants, jungle and mountains, while dolphins and whales crested the waves.

The discovery of sea routes to the Indian Ocean by the emerging European powers, and the subsequent occupation of lands in the Asian region necessitated the production of more definite maps. In this respect, the first European invaders, the Portugese were secretive about their trade routes and left behind few examples of cartography. A Dutch cartographer named Nikolass Visscher produced a map entitled "The Island of Ceylon once known as Taprobane, Tenarism and Lankawa".

It was Guilaume Delisle. Chief Geographer of the French monarchy who executed a credible map published in Paris in 1722 in which the island (Sri Lanka) is divided into provinces.

The boundaries of Delisle map are marked in colour and the provinces described as "The Kingdom of Jaffna", "the Country of Vannias" (inhabited by the Malabars), "Batticaloa or Maticaloa", "The Kingdom of Kandy" and "Cinnamon Country" (formally called the Kingdom of Cota).

### NALLUR CITY ASSOCIATED WITH EMINENT PERSONAGES

The vibrant city of Nallur is associated with eminent personages who had contributed to the upliftment of the local population. About 200 years later after the fall of the Jaffna Kingdom in 1620 there emerged a figure to provide succour and lead the helpless out of the mire and their messiah was Arumugam born in 1822 in Nallur later to be known as Arumuga Navalar. He was hailed as a scholar and author, teacher and preacher, exemplar and reformer, mighty genius and indefatigable worker, lover of Tamil, lover of Saivism and lover of God.

In 1905, Saint Yogaswami met his Guru, Sage Chellappa at 'Theradi', Nallur Kandaswamy temple – a place Sage Chellappa goes in recluse for meditation. Saint Yogaswami was initiated into spiritual life by his Guru, Sage Chellappa.

Yogaswami was described as 'a saint' who shed the spiritual light, showed the path through 'Self Realisation' to his devotees principally through his sublime songs – Natchinthanai (Good Thoughts) – which are veritable treasures of thought and of language.

The list can go on about the historic Nallur City. Currently the place is often called by the traditional name of 'Nallur Village' which encompasses the revered Nallur Kandswamy temple and the associated places of worship and institutions which are located at a stone throw from Nallur Kanthan temple.

### HISTORICAL RECORDS

Appended are extracts from two sources ie.:

1. The diary of J. P. Lewis, the Government Agent of Jaffna and;
2. The Ceylon Antiquary and Literary Register. The records reveal some information relevant to the Jaffna Kingdom at Nallur City.

*[The above article was published in the Jaffnese Cooperative Society official newsletter 'Pathfinder' – October 2013 issue.]*



## GOVERNMENT AGENT'S DIARY

*J. P. Lewis, Government Agent, Jaffna*

### **18th September 1903, (Paragraph 59) Site of Palace of Jaffna King, Nallur**

I also went to see the site of the palace of the Jaffna King at Nallur off the Point Pedro Road. It is called "Sangili Toppu" after the last king who reigned at Jaffna whose name is said to have been Sangili and is now temple property. The buildings of the palace and a temple were destroyed by the Portuguese. There is an old gateway at the entrance which is evidently the work of the Dutch...

### **18th September 1903, (Paragraph 60) Jamnari Tank**

There is a tank (separate from this garden by paddy field) called "Jamneri" which is said to have been constructed by the Tamil Kings for the use of their families, with descents to it one for men and one for women. It is further said that water for it was brought from the Jamna river in India, hence the name "Jamna Tank" to hallow it. It is very rectangular shape with a platform in the middle of one side on which there was formerly a buliding of some kind.

### **October 1906, 1. Dutch Gateway, Nallur**

Completed aquisition of Old Dutch Gateway of Nallur on the site of the former palace of Jaffna Kings. It was acquired with the consent of the owner for an amount of Rs10/-

## THE CEYLON ANTIQUARY AND LITERARY REGISTER (VOL. II, PART II – 1916, PAGE 98)

At Nellore (Nallur), which is a suburb of Jaffna is the site of the palace of the former Tamil Rajas. It is known as 'Sankili Toppu' which name is derived from that of the last king, which was Sankili. On this land is a tank called Yamuneri which was constructed by the Tamil Kings "for use of their families", so I was told...

The building of the palace was destroyed by the Portuguese. The Dutch seem to have built a Government House on the site, and the entrance gateway remains – a large semi circular arched doorway, surmounted by a brick pediment and gable of an unmistakably Dutch type, but sometimes, on account of its position, claimed as a portion of the remains of the palaces of the Tamil Kings.

# The Jaffna Peninsula, North Sri Lanka: A Historical Perspective

*A vibrant land that offers uniqueness that is hard to define and harder to resist*



Jaffna lagoon

## INTRODUCTION

Sri Lanka is an island with a total area of 25,000 square miles. It is separated from the Indian sub-continent by a narrow strip of shallow water, the Palk Strait.

The history of Sri Lanka is recorded from the reign of King Vijaya in 543BC when the land was known as Lanka. Once upon a time Lanka was part of the continent of Lumeria which escaped sinking.

'Ilam, Ilamandalam or Ilanadu' was the applied name by the Tamils for Ceylon from time immemorial. Ceylon it was stated, was famous for the production of gold. 'Ilam' in Tamil means gold. From Ilam came

the Silam and Sihalam. From Silam came Zailon of the Portuguese, Ceilon or Seilon of the Dutch and Ceylon by the British.

Nagadip, Serandip, Singhaladip, Tamraparai and more names were given by the various nationalities who came to Ceylon. Now it stands as an independent nation called The Republic of Sri Lanka.

The King of Ilam was at one time a feudatory to the Chola Dynasty. Gampala was the centre of Singhalese political power. Eventually, when the Portuguese arrived in 1505AD there were three kingdoms:

- The Jaffna Kingdom including Vanni Regions (Tamil Eelam)
- The Kandy Kingdom
- The Kotte Kingdom

Records indicate that ambassadors were appointed to represent the Tamil Kingdom of Ilam – one Rasiah Aratchiar was ambassador of the King of Jaffna to the Court of Claudius, the Roman Emperor. Another Sellappu Aratchiar was in Court of Lisbon.

### JAFFNA – ONE OF THE DISTRICTS OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCE OF SRI LANKA

In the days when the science of sailing was to hug the coastline, sea traffic between the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian sea passed mainly through the Palk Strait. This made the Jaffna Peninsula or Mani-Pallavam a prominent port of call for sea-farers.

The traders who traded in the North of Ceylon at various times include Phoenicians, Arabs, Ethiopians, Persians, Romans, Chinese, Javanese and of course Indians.

Jaffna District is located in the far north of Sri Lanka in the Northern Province and occupies most of the Jaffna Peninsula. It has an area of 396 square miles. According to the Department of Census and Statistics, the population of Jaffna as at 2007 is 559,619 persons with 98.95% of the population are Tamils.

Jaffna as a centre of Sri Lankan Tamil culture, was at one time the country's second most populous city. According to the 1981 census, Jaffna had a population of 812,247 inhabitants of which the Tamils comprised of 97.73% of the total population of Jaffna.

Historical records indicate that between 5th century BC and 13th century AD, the present day Jaffna District was part of Rajarata. Jaffna District was thereafter became part of the pre-colonial Jaffna Kingdom.

The District then came under Portuguese, Dutch and British control. In 1815, the British gained control of the entire island of Ceylon. Under the British rule, the Ceylon Government set up the Survey Department. In 1821, a cartographer named John Davys produced a map providing comprehensive

data pertaining to the island of Ceylon.

In reference to 'Jaffna Town', the map has grouped the Jaffna town and its agricultural hinterland and the surrounding islands as 'Jaffna Peninsula and Islands'.

In 1833 in accordance with the recommendations of the Colebrooke-Cameron Commission, the British Government politically unified the Tamil regions with the Sinhalese for administration purposes, ending the separateness of Tamil identity. The country was divided into five geographic provinces. Jaffna District, together with the Mannar District and Vanni District formed the new Northern Province.

At the time when Ceylon gained independence (1948), Jaffna was one of the Three districts located in the Northern Province. In 1978, parts of the district were transferred to newly created Mullaitivu District. Later Kilinochchi District was carved out of the southern part of Jaffna District in 1984.

### THE MANY NAMES OF JAFFNA

There were many names given to Jaffna. They included: Valigama or Valligamam (meaning in Sinhalese 'sandy district'), Manatidal, Manalur, Manipuram (meaning in Tamil 'sandy district'). Names given to Jaffna by foreign countries include Manibar of Edirisi an Arab traveller, Mynibar of John de Marignolli, and Minibar of Odoric the Franciscan Friar from his details of the Kingdoms of Malabar, Mobar and Minibar and list goes on.

Later when Tamils had their capital at Nallur, the Sinhalese called it Yahapatpattuna – a Sinhalese translation of Nallur. It was said that the Tamils tamilsed it into Yalpanam.

The advent of the Portuguese era witnesses the building of a town close to the settlement of Pasiyur which they called Jaffna. With the arrival of other Europeans and the downhill trend of the Tamils, the whole of the peninsula came to be known as Jaffna.

In this respect Mudaliyar C. Rasanayagam C. C. S., a well-known scholar and historian cum author of *Ancient History of Jaffna* says, "To the people of Jaffna, the town only is still known as Yalpanam"

Dr. Paul E. Peiris, a Singhalese ethnologist and antiquarian of international repute was said to share his view for in his book *The Kingdom of Jafnapatna*, he said, "To the Tamil, Jaffna is still Pattanam".

### CHOLA INFLUENCE IN CEYLON

The Tamil Kingdom which was at one time located in northern Sri Lanka had been subjected to Chola rule from time to time. The Cholas being ardent Saivites were great patrons of Hinduism in South India. Their period of rule covered nearly four centuries.

The Chola rule had left an impact on the history of Sri Lanka, more particularly, on the history of the Tamil people. The inevitable consequence of the Chola rule was the profound penetration of the Brahmin Saivite religious practices as well as the Dravidian culture, architecture and Tamil language into the religion and culture of Eelam, whereby the latter became strong and reached great heights. From this period forth, the authority exercised by South India over Eelam had been entirely based on Hinduism. The most remarkable development in Hinduism during the Chola period was the rise of the temples as a great centre of religious, social and cultural activity.

### THE ERA OF THE TAMIL KINGDOM

The 13th century was a remarkable period in the continuing history of Jaffna. Historians highlight that this period witnessed the establishment of an independent Tamil Kingdom of Sri Lanka. The reign of the distinguished dynasty of Ariya Chakravarthys' (Emperors) had commenced in the 13th century. Vijayakalingan was the first King of Ariya Chakravathy Dynasty who had shifted the capital from Singhai Nagar back to Nagadipa (Jaffna Peninsula). Kailayamalai states that Cinkaiyarian (Singhai Ariyan) was the first Tamil King and was the founder of the Ariya Chakravarthy Dynasty of kings. It is also significant that traditions which had been current in Jaffna also had regarded that Singhai Ariyan to have come from the Pandya Kingdom and established a dynasty.

In Jaffna Peninsula, the King chose Nallur as the location to establish his kingdom for the following

reasons:

- the remoteness from the centres of Singhalese power.
- It's proximity to South Indian ports.
- The prospects of controlling the sea-coast on both sides of the Gulf of Mannar.

### HINDUISM

During the era of Chola rule, the foundation was laid in Eelam for the propagation of Hindu religion and Tamil culture. This was reinforced by the Tamil Kings of Jaffna during their rule. Jaffna became the heart of Tamil Hindu culture, with its society organised along similar lines to the Tamil regions of South India.

Hindu institutions were supported by the Kings and were strengthened by the influx of Brahmins. The Tamil language became entrenched in the peninsula, which was nurtured by the Kings of Jaffna and enriched by contact with South India.

### HINDUISM UNDER FOREIGN RULE

A dark and gloomy period followed the devastation of Hindu temples. The Portuguese who were in Ceylon from 1505 to 1658AD carried out measures for the subjugation and eradication of any religion other than theirs, which they established. The Dutch who were in Ceylon for about 150 years from 1658AD were largely engaged in wiping out the religious work of the Portuguese and substituting their own instead. Hinduism was dormant. Hindus who were more courageous, with deeper convictions, observed their religious practices in secret.

The British took charge of Ceylon from 1815AD. They had their missionary zeal, but with a spirit of tolerance to other religions.

### RESUSCITATION OF HINDUISM

Arumuga Navalar who lived in the 19th century was responsible for the resuscitation of Hinduism. He dedicated his life to the revival of Saivism and the promotion of Tamil language.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE SITE OF NALLUR

As mentioned earlier, Nallur served as the capital

of the Jaffna Kings, with the royal palace situated very close to the Nallur Kandaswamy temple. Nallur was built with four entrances with gates. There were two main roadways and four temples at the four gateways.

The centre of Nallur city was surrounded by a square fortification around it. There were courtly buildings for the kings, Brahmin priests, soldiers and other service providers. The old Nallur Kandaswamy temple functioned as a defensive fort with high walls. In short, the city was laid out like a traditional temple town according to Hindu traditions. The temple was destroyed by the Portuguese in 1624. King Sankili II was the last king of the Jaffna Kingdom. Today, Nallur is still a vibrant area with full of activities with a population of about 68,000 people.

### **ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES**

Over the centuries, Jaffna's Tamils built a wholly distinctive culture. Despite the unsuitability of much of the thinned red soil for agriculture, Tamil cultivators developed techniques of well-irrigation which capitalised on the reserves of ground water held in limestone, making intensive rice cultivation the basis of a successful economy. Diversity was provided by coconut and palmyrah palms, tobacco and a wide range of other products. As a matter of fact, Jaffna's palmyras are much the dominated feature of the northern landscape and is the cornerstone of the local economy. However, the internal war took a toll on the palmyrah industry. The Tamil population was also international in outlook. They maintained trading links not only with the Tamils region across the Palk Strait but also with South East Asia.

### **TAMILS UNDER THE BRITISH RULE**

From the mid-19th century under the British rule, the Jaffna Tamils availed themselves of the educational opportunities. They rapidly became numerically dominant in a range of Government services and jobs within Ceylon and overseas. In the early 1970's, the Government introduced the quota system for education and employment which aimed to reduce the Tamil influence. It is said that this restriction was

one of the contributory factors to the conflict that followed.

### **CONCLUSION**

It would be seen that the geographical positioning of the Jaffna Peninsula favoured the Tamil inhabitants there. In this respect, the north of Ceylon is a world away from the rest of Sri Lanka. Jaffna Peninsula is closer to South India than Colombo. The region was settled earlier on by Tamil migrants from southern India and has retained a unique character and culture, one which owes more to Hindu India than to Buddhist Sri Lanka.

Though Jaffna appears to be battered as a result of the internal strife, nevertheless it still retains its charm for it offers a uniqueness that is hard to define and harder to resist. A land where Tamil language is kept pure and the unique Tamil culture vibrant. Jaffna is slowly regaining its composure after long and dreary internal war. Hotel industry is thriving owing to the patronage of the Sri Lankan Tamil diasporas from abroad.

Jaffna Peninsula and the surrounding islands offers string of temples, places of pilgrimage and places of tourist attraction. Tourist attractions range from the mini desert of Manalkadu near Point Pedro to the largest tree in Asia – the baobab tree located in Mannar and to the bottomless well near Puttur.

One of the places of pilgrimage is the Nallur Kandaswamy temple. It is about 3km from Jaffna town and is located amidst the beautiful white sand and in a peaceful setting. It acts as a beacon on any day and every day for many religious people. The annual temple festival which takes place in the month of August draws a large crowd, not only from Jaffna and elsewhere within the country, but also from abroad – the diaspora as well as the foreign tourists.

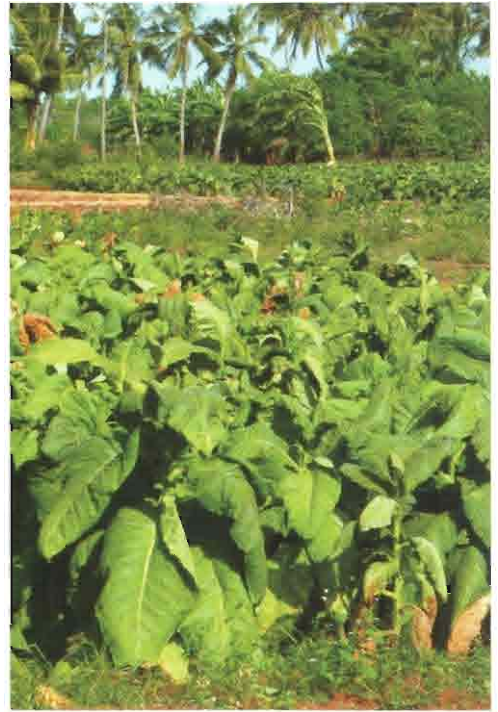
During the Nallur temple festival time, the temple and its surrounding becomes alive by 4am. The temple starts reverberating with the temple bells and gongs, giving a mystic holy feel to the entire neighbourhood.



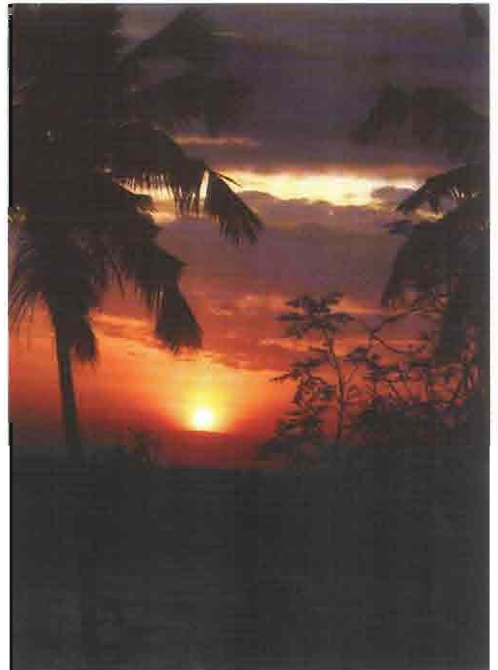
The clock tower located at Clock Tower Road in Jaffna town is an architectural blend of Islamic and Gothic style. It was designed by a British Architect J.G. Smither and was built in 1875. The clock tower which was in a state of disrepair was restored and re-opened in June 2002 with clocks donated by H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. Above right: The restored clock tower.



Jaffna town with the market in the background.



Some typical scenes in and around Jaffna.  
Clockwise from top left: rice cultivation;  
tobacco; sunrise; day break and palmyrah grove.





Top: Casuarina beach, Karainagar. Left: Jaffna lagoon. Below: Nallur Kandswamy Temple





## The Palmyrah Tree

*A Tree of Life*

Indigenous to South India and Sri Lanka is the palmyrah palm which has been rightly described as the "Tree of Life". The palm belongs to the Palmaceous tree family. The tree is found in abundance in the Northern peninsular, especially in the East and the North Western Coast. Two-third of the islands palms are found in Jaffna district. However, the protracted internal strife has taken a toll and stunted the growth of the industry. A lot of trees suffered damages and destruction caused by aerial bombardment and war missiles.

Tall, elegant and majestic, the palmyrah tree shoots up unbranched to a height of about 18 to 20 metres and ends in a crown of long palma and serrated leaves. The leaves grow up to two or three metres long and stands erect at the crown and toss its head with the wind movement. An adolescent tree looks somewhat rugged with petiole attached to the straight black trunk but it later grows streamlined.

Its presence inspires the poet and the artist alike but seldom has its praises been sung. It has a personality of its own, recalling to the "exile" refreshing memories of countless days spent under its meagre shade, of carefree hours and of boyhood delights.

Its utilitarian values are too numerous to mention.



The cool fermented juice of the palm inebriates the mirth-seeking peasant while the toddy quenches the thirst of the humble villager.

The dark purplish coloured and rounded fruit weighs around 1.5 kg and is edible. The pulp of the fruit contains 600gms juice and is sweet to the taste

buds. But there is an element of bitterness to the fruit, which can be reduced by heating the fruit over the embers of a fire.

The luscious fruit provides “jam” for the day’s need and jaggery for tea. The ripe fruit will rival the sweetness of a mango while the three eyed ‘nonku’ is the delight of the children. A single palmyrah tree produces about 200 fruits but only an average of 50 fruits reach the ground, the balance being eaten by rats and squirrels.

The seed is buried in the earth and is unearthed when the tender shoots spring out. Its long and slender tuber is known as ‘odiyal’ is boiled or dried process and consumed. The dried odiyial is ground and the flour used for making ‘Kool’ a nourishing porridge. The odiyial when boiled can be served as subsidiary food.

Palmyrah sap is tapped from inflorescence and such tappings is mainly in Jaffna District. The yield could be consumed in a fermented stage called toddy. The sweet sap when tapped, flows from the stalk of the palmyrah palm and is collected in earthen pots coated with slaked lime. Such treatment prevents fermentation and keeps the liquid sweet (sweet toddy) and is considered as one of the most desirable natural beverages containing high natural value.

Jaggery is made directly by concentrating the sweet toddy to a thick consistency. The sap is boiled down to a lesser degree of concentration than jaggery for the manufacture of sugar candy. The resulting syrup is poured into covered pots and buried underground for months and crystals of sugar candy are deposited in the pots. Sugar candy is of medicinal value.

The toddy can be processed to make arrack. Toddy can also be pasteurised and retailed as bottled toddy.

Sterilized unfermented sap could be fermented with suitable strains of yeast to produce palmyrah wine.

The Palmyrah fibre has very unique qualities to prove that it is one of the best fibre. It is hard and resistant when exposed to both alkalic and acidic conditions. As Palmyrah fibre has a good flexibility, it is now used for making products like brushes for domestic and industrial purposes. Other non edible products are by-products of leaves such as mats, baskets, trays, boxes etc. Palmyrah cane ‘Naar’ yields cane threads of high tensile strength from leaf stalk and timber products.

The Palmyrah tree is symbolic to the early Jaffna man who came to this country, Malaysia to eke a living. He often suffered from nostalgia in reminiscing the picturesque scene of the stateliness and individuality of this noble tree that asks nothing but heaven above and sand below and a pale blue sea beyond.



Palmyrah products

# The Vanniyars

*Noted agriculturist and keen observers of religious practices*

### INTRODUCTION

The history of Ceylon Tamils would be incomplete without the history of the Vanniyars who for more than 1000 years were the rulers of the Vanni districts and the custodian of all that are great in the Tamils and in their national culture.

### GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Vanni was the name given to the northern country between Jaffna Peninsula and the Nuwarakalawiya District. Before it acquired the name Vanni, it seems to have been known as "Adankapattu." It is stretched from Trincomalee on the east to Mannar on the west. The extent of Vanni area is about 3000 square miles. There are no mountains in the Vanni District to ensure a perennial supply of water for the cultivation of crops, but fresh water surface springs flow out at certain areas. A well-planned Irrigation Schemes brought water into the area from hills of the south.

### THE COMING OF VANNIYARS TO CEYLON

Various explanations are given to the coming of the Vanniyars from South India to Ceylon. One explanation given by Vaipava Malai is as follows:

*"In the reign of King Pandu about AC 436, a chief from India named Kulakoddan came over to Ceylon and repaired certain shrines and dedicated large tracts of land with their revenues to the use of these temples. He brought in Vanniyars from India and placed them over these tracts with strict order to cultivate them for the benefit of the*

*temple. There came a band of fifty nine families from Pandya country and they rapidly increased in members. Seven chieftain were selected from among the Vanniyars to exercise sovereign power each within his own territory."*

The descendants of these chieftains continued to exercise power within their respective territories over which they ruled and such territories came to be called Vanni. The people who inhabited these districts were known as Vanniyars.

### AGRICULTURIST WITH RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

The Vanniyars were noted agriculturist in their homeland who came over and took charge of the development of the lands. They opened up lands and cultivated them for the benefit of the temple and themselves.

They were observers of religious practices. They were, in fact, a community with a strong religious background. To them a fundamental obligation in life was looking after, building up and paying attention to their places of worship.

### CONCLUSION

Whatever may be the interpretation of the advent of the Vanniyars and the colonists that settled in the Vanni districts, it is a fact that, the northern districts known as 'Uttaradesa' in Sinhalese chronicles were inhabited by the Vanniyars from a very early date.

## Saiva Thirumurais

*The scriptures of Saivism*



Chidambaram – the holy place where the Saiva Thirumurais were revered and protected.

### INTRODUCTION

If one is to begin to recite hymn in Tamil, one would begin with 'THIRUCHITRAMBALAM' and end with the same word; the word means the presiding deity of Chidambaram whose blessing one desires. The reason being that Chidambaram is the holy place, in which the 'Saiva Thirumurai' were revered and protected. It is also the birth place of music.

### THE TWELVE THIRUMURAI

The 'Thirumurais' is made up of the words 'thiru' and 'murai'. Thiru means holy, divine, beautiful, wealth while murai means order, ancient and text. Thus the terms 'Twelve Thirumurais' means the twelve

sacred texts which are most suitable for recitation or singing during prayer or at any moment of our lives be it happy or otherwise.

These hymns (of the first eleven Thirumurais) were sung by 26 saints one of whom is said to be Siva Himself. The date of their composition stretches from the 4th or 5th to the 11th century, AD. The first eleven collections were compiled by Nampi Aandaar Nampi during the reign of Raja Raja Cholan 1.

### THEVARAMS

The first seven Thirumurais are known as Thevaram

meaning (i) devotional songs on God ('The' = God; 'varam' = love, musical verses) and (ii) a garland of songs dedicated to God. ('Theva' = God. 'Aram' = garland); They were composed by the four 'Saiva Kuravars' or 'Naalvars'. Thevarams which are rich in devotional and philosophical flavours are mostly sung in praise of Lord Siva in various temples.

The seven Thirumurais composed by the 'Naalvars' are as follows:

- Saint Thirugnanasambanthar composed Thirumurais one, two and three.
- Saint Thirunavukkarasar composed Thirumurais four, five and six.
- Saint Sundaramoorthy composed the seventh Thirumurai

Thevarams are set in simple taalam such as aathi, aeka, roopaka and tripata, as opposed to other songs which branch out to 'pallavi', 'anuppalavi' and 'saranam'.

### THIRUVASAKAM

The eighth Thirumurai was composed by Saint Manickavasagar termed as 'Thiruvasakam' and 'Thirukovaiyar'. Thiruvasakam is the collection of all songs that were sung during the entire life of Manickavasagar. The Thirukovaiyar are songs sung by Manickavasagar before he attained mukthi (Sivapatham).

Saint Manickavasagar sang the Thiruvasakam. The Thiruvasakam, which touches our hearts, has the significant feature of being written by Lord Siva himself.

The word Thiruvasakam means 'Thirumayamana vasakam'. Here 'Thiru' refers to the grace of Lord and 'vasakam' is the form of 'Arul Nadham' (gracious sound). Lord Siva was enthralled to hear the Thiruvasakam and Thirukovai and thus lent his hand in writing them.

### THIRUVISAIPPA AND THIRUPALLANDU

The ninth Thirumurai termed 'Thiruvisaippa' and 'Thirupallandu' was composed by nine mystics as listed below:

1. Thirumaalihat Thaevar

2. Saenthanaar
3. Karuvoort Thaevar
4. Poonthurutthi Nampi Kaada Nampi
5. Kanndar Aathiltthar
6. Vaenaadttadikal
7. Thiruvaaliyamuthanaar
8. Purudoatthama Nampi
9. Saethiraayar

Thiruvisaippa is the divine hymns of praises and glories of the Lord which were graciously rendered by the above nine poets with total commitment and pure devotion.

Thirupallandu on the other hand, is the divine hymns praising Lord Siva for all happiness He has offered to His devotees. It expresses the gracious acts of the Lord and blesses Him with longevity. It should be noted that poet, Saenthanaar composed three Pathihams of Thiruvisaippa and one pathiham of Thirupallandu. A pathiham usually contain 10 verses but those of Sambanthar usually contain 11 or even 12 verses. Even though the first eleven Thirumurais are classified during the reign of King Raja Raja Chola 1, some verses seem to have been added later. For instance, there are verses that are sung by Lord Siva in the temples of Kankai Konda Cholapuram. This temple was built by his son Rajendra Chola after his successful march to Ganges.

### THIRUMANTHIRAM

The tenth Thirumurai was composed by Saint Thirumoolar termed 'Thirumanthiram' with 3000 verses. It is divided into nine sections called thanthirams which are further divided into sub sections.

- The first thanthiram describes the kind of good behavior that enables one to attain knowledge (gnanam)
- The second explains the five fold functions of God.
- The third deals with the various forms of yoga and mystic powers.
- The fourth deals with mantras.
- The fifth thanthiram deals with the various

religious practices observed by Saivites in the pursuit of Moksha.

- The sixth explains the role of a guru and the need to choose a guru who is capable of guiding a spiritual aspirant properly.
- The seventh deals with the dances of Lord Siva.
- The eighth contains matters relating to Saiva philosophy.
- The ninth (last) is a treatise on the panchaakshara and the experience of those who have achieved true knowledge.

### THIRUMURAI 11

Thirumurai 11 contains a total of forty one different works composed by twelve devotees. These texts sing in praise of Vinayagar, Murugan, Siva and some naayanmars as follows:

- Vinayagar (3 texts)
- Murugan (1 text)
- St Thirugnanasambanthar (6 texts)
- St Thirunavukkarasar (1 text)
- Kannappar (2 texts)
- Saeramaan Perumal (2 texts)
- Thiruthondars (all the devotees) (1 text)
- Lord Siva (26 texts)

It would be seen that the majority of the texts (26) are sung in praise of Lord Siva.

### THIRUMURAI 12 (PERIYAPURANAM)

Saint Sekhizhar composed the Periya Puraanam (Siva Mantra) and Panchaakshara Mantra which later became the twelfth Thirumurai which is a biography of 63 devotees of Lord Siva.

The author (Sekhizhar) has followed most faithfully the list of devotees honoured by Sundarar, the author of the seventh Thirumurai in his pathiham called Thiruthondar Thohai and using the life story of Sundarar himself as the basic story, he has woven the life stories of the others around it.

Though the name Periya Puraanam is usually used for this text, the original name seems to have been 'Thiru Thondar Puraanam' because it sings

of devotees of thondars. The text begins with the popular verse in praise of Lord Siva at Thillai as Nataraja. The opening words 'ulahelaam' were said to have been suggested by the Lord Himself and Sekhizhar, using those words sang His praise in the simplest words possible and made the opening prayers customarily found in epics and larger works.

### CONCLUSION

Of all these devotional songs, the Thevarams and Thiruvacakams are the most popular and the authors of these works are especially revered as the four most important Saivite Saints. The Saivite Temples have the tradition of singing these during pujas but only five known as Panchapuraanam (literally five traditional songs) are sung.

The Panchapuraanam is made up of a selection of one verse from each of the following: Thevaaram, Thiruvacakam, Thiruvisaippa, Thirupallandu and Periyapuraanam. These enable a person to praise God, to show devotion, sing His greatness and grace, say benediction and ask that the whole world may benefit by this prayer. Apart from these poems, no other is traditionally permitted to be sung during the puja and other such rituals.

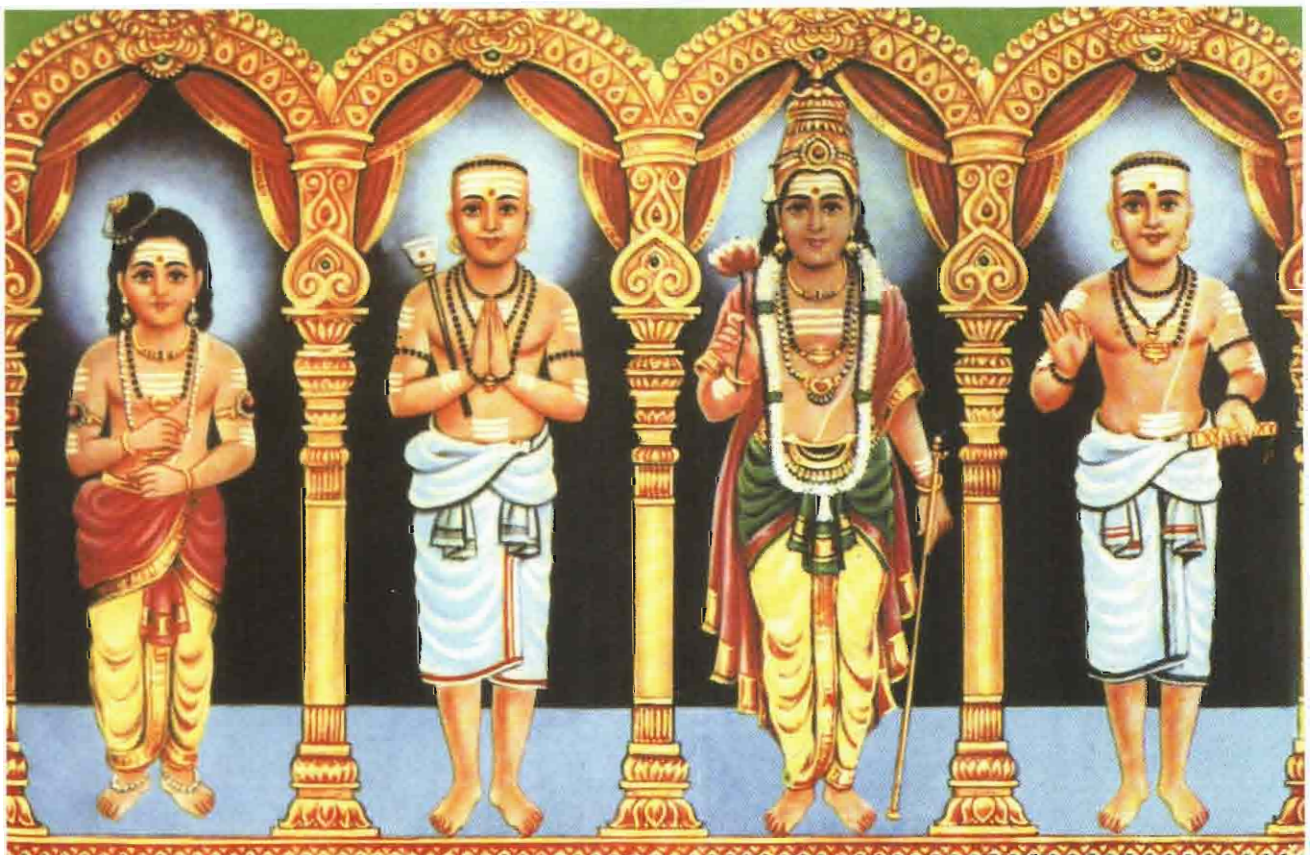
There are however, some exceptions. The Kanthapuraanam which sings of the glories and gracious deeds of Murugan shows that He is that but another form of the power of Lord Siva. Hence, verses from this work are substituted for the Periyapuraanam in the worship of Murugan.

Besides, in the Thiruppukal(z) by Arunakirinathar is also sung after the Panchapuraanam, the worship of Murugan for He is believed to have imparted knowledge to Arunakirinathar and accepted the poet as His devotee.

Quite often, in congregational or group prayers, the compositions of Thaayumaanavar, Kumarakuruppar, and others are also accepted as devotional songs and Thiruvilaiyaadal Puraanam which sings of the various sports of Lord Siva have also become part of the Saiva devotional literature suitable for use during prayer and worship.

## Saiva Saints or Nayanmaars

*Also known as Saiva Kuravars or Naalvars*



Bakthi movements were found to be invariably a mass movement with intensified fervour to protect Hinduism against possible encroachment of other religion.

During the era of the Pandyan King Sri Mara Sri Vallava, there was a resurgence of Saivism and Vaishnavism. It was a period of psalms and hymns of religious fervor. These inspired the development of Bakthi as an aid or main course to religious realization. It created an intense emotional wave. The Nayanmaars (Saivism) and the Alvaars (Vaishnavism) were mainly responsible with their intensely devotional compositions, they went from place to place holding discourses and singing

praises of the Lord.

Amidst such culture splendor and emotional fervor the Lord inspires the Saiva Samayachariyar Saints to out-pouring of garlands of Thevarams. The religious resurgence and the emergence of the Bakthi movement inspired and aroused the people to a state of emotional surrender to the Divine. Groups of devotees led by inspired preachers and learned men with religious fervor traversed the land holding discourses, lectures, talks, singing hymns etc and danced in ecstasy.

These saintly leaders in the course of time came to be known as Nayanmaars. Among them, tradition chose 63 as being foremost of them all and these

were referred to as the '63 Nayanmaars' and their statues are objects of worship in every Sivan temple today.

Four of the foremost Saiva Saints (Naalvars) are:

- Saint Thirugnanasambanthar
- Saint Thirunaavukkarasar
- Saint Sundara Moorthy
- Saint Manickavasagar

A brief life history and their contribution to the Saiva world are as follows:

### SAINT THIRUGNANASAMBANTHAR



Of the twelve Thirumurais, the first three devoted to songs composed by Saint Thirugnanasambanthar, the first of the four Samaiya Achariyars. He received 'the milk of divine' wisdom from Parvathi Ammaiyaar Herself.

Having drunk the milk of divine wisdom at the tender age of three, Saint Thirugnanasambanthar sang his first Thevaram – *Thodudaya Seviyan*. So pleased with this divine child, the gracious Lord Siva Himself presented him with various gifts – golden cymbals, a pearl palanquin, a pearl umbrella and gold coins.

Thirugnanasambanthar travelled far and wide visiting the holy shrines of Lord Siva and singing numerous Thevarams. Previous to this mode of travel, his father carried him on his shoulders to various temples. Lived in the seventh century, he was a Brahmin from Shirghali in the Thanjavur area. Born at a time when worship of Siva was at a low ebb, his noble work was the vanguishing of the Jains and restoring the confidence of the Pandyan King, in his own religion. He performed several miracles to convince the people of Saiva faith and also to re-establish Saivism in Madurai and eventually defeated the Jains and established Saivism in South India. On his wedding day, at the age of sixteen, he prayed to Lord Siva for liberation. At the wedding ceremony, an effulgent light appeared from the Lord, and all who were at the wedding

ceremony merged into the Divine Flame.

In his short span of life, he had composed 384 pathihams or cantos which make up Thirumurai 1, 2 and 3.

His indomitable courage is best portrayed on a cantos of 11 verses rendered by him, when he was advised against an undertaking due to unsuitable astrological indications. In this garland of 11 verses, he assures that anyone who chants them with devotion and piety, is protected from the evil effects of planets (Navagrahas), infectious diseases, wild animals, evil spirits, etc.

### SAINT THIRUNAVUKKARASAR



Fondly called Appar, Saint Thirunavukkarasar is believed to have lived during the reign of the Pallava King Mahendra 1 (580–630AD). In his early years he embraced Jainism and changed his name, Marulneekiyaar, to

Dharmasena. This worried his sister Thilagavathiyaa and she prayed to Lord Siva at the temple of Veerattanesvarar.

Meanwhile Dharmasena began suffering from a colic pain and no one could cure him, not even the Jain priests. Having no one to turn to, he remembered his sister and returned home. Chanting the Panchaakshara mantra and spreading holy ash on his forehead, she took him to the temple of Veerattanesvarar. He surrendered at the Lord's feet and sang his first Thevaram – *Kootaryinavaru*. His pain was relieved and since then he has rendered 307 pathihams (cantos) of Thevaram verses; each pathiham generally compose of about ten to eleven verses. These Thevaram verses are classified today as Thirumurai 4, 5 and 6. He was always seen carrying a garden hoe which he used to clear the pathways leading to the temple and temple courtyards.

At age 81, he merged with Lord Siva. He lived part of his life with Saint Thirugnanasambanthar who affectionately called him Appar or Father. He wandered throughout the Tamil land sometimes in the company of Sambanthar visiting shrines



rendering and singing Thevarams. He is the earliest of the saints who have contributed songs of praise of the Lord of Thiruketheeswaram, Mannar, Sri Lanka.

### SAINT SUNDARA MOORTHY



Sundarar, also known as Vanthondan was the third of the Samaiya Achariyars. Throughout his life one observes the affection and fondness Lord Siva had for him. He was a Brahmin born of a poor parentage and was brought up by a local chief. The first miracle was at the time of his marriage when the Lord appeared in front of him in the form of an old Brahmin. He claimed Sundarar as His slave. After a dispute Sundarar accepted it. The Gracious Lord Siva also gave him the first line for composing Thevarams.

The songs sung by Sundarar are referred as the 7th Thirumurai. He also composed the famous 'Thiruthondar Thokai' which is a compilation of verses that contain all names of 63 Nayanars which later to be elaborated upon by Nambi Aandar Nambi. Sundarar was considered as the Lord's companion. It is said that he and his friend the Chera ruler Cheraman Perumal made the last journey to the abode of the Lord at Mt. Kailash in about the year 825AD. His devotion to the Lord was that of an intimate friend and he was therefore Thambiran's tholan.

In the short span of two years, which he was endowed with for his spiritual mission, he made pilgrimages to the places of abode and activity of the Nayanmaars and several religious sthalams. He gathered details of the lives of these saints and composed the first attempted history of the Nayanmaars which later had to be elaborated by Nambi Aandar Nambi.

There are about 100 pathihams of Thevarams which have out-poured from Saint Sundarar; it was during his pilgrimage to the Rama Linga Temple at Rameswaram, that he hears reports of the Lord and His abode. He then rendered his out-pouring in a pathiham of 10 (Thevarams) verses on the Lord.

### SAINT MANICKAVASAGAR

Saint Manickavasagar Swamigal, Vaathavurar or Manivasagar as familiarly referred to, is the fourth



saint of the Saiva Siddhanta Samaiya Achariyars. His name Manickam denotes gem and his work 'Thiruvaasakam'.

Manivasagar, was a poet, saint and sage of high eminence. He belonged to a Brahmin family from

Vaathavur, a town on the banks of the Vaigai river which flows past the city of Madurai in South India.

Early in life, his superior learning and qualifications earned for him a place in the court of the Pandyan Kingdom, where he eventually achieves the office of Prime Minister. Even while being the Prime Minister, his mind was always immersed in thoughts of Lord Siva. He longed for spiritual knowledge and searched for a Guru. One day, he was sent on a Royal Commission to purchase horses for the Kings Cavalry. Along the way, seated under the Kurunta tree, the gracious Lord Siva waited for the gifted soul, Vathavurar. The Lord initiated him and from that moment he sang inspiring songs on Lord Siva known as 'Thiruvasakam'.

However he loses favour with the King due to exhausting the finances on building a temple for the Lord at Thiruperunthurai. He suffered dishonor and imprisonment but was subsequently reprieved and set free by the King on the intervention of the Divine Manifestation. He there upon assumed an ascetic life, made pilgrimages to several shrines and finally settled down in Chidambaram (Thillai) where he died at the age of thirty two years. The whole of Thiruvasakam has been considered to be the narration of a pilgrim's progress – the soul in its search to reach God. To Saint Manickavasagar, the Supreme One is 'Supreme Bliss', 'Delight Supernatural' or 'Ocean of Bliss'.

Thiruvasakam has been translated in full into English by Dr G. U. Pope and published by Oxford University Press in 1900.

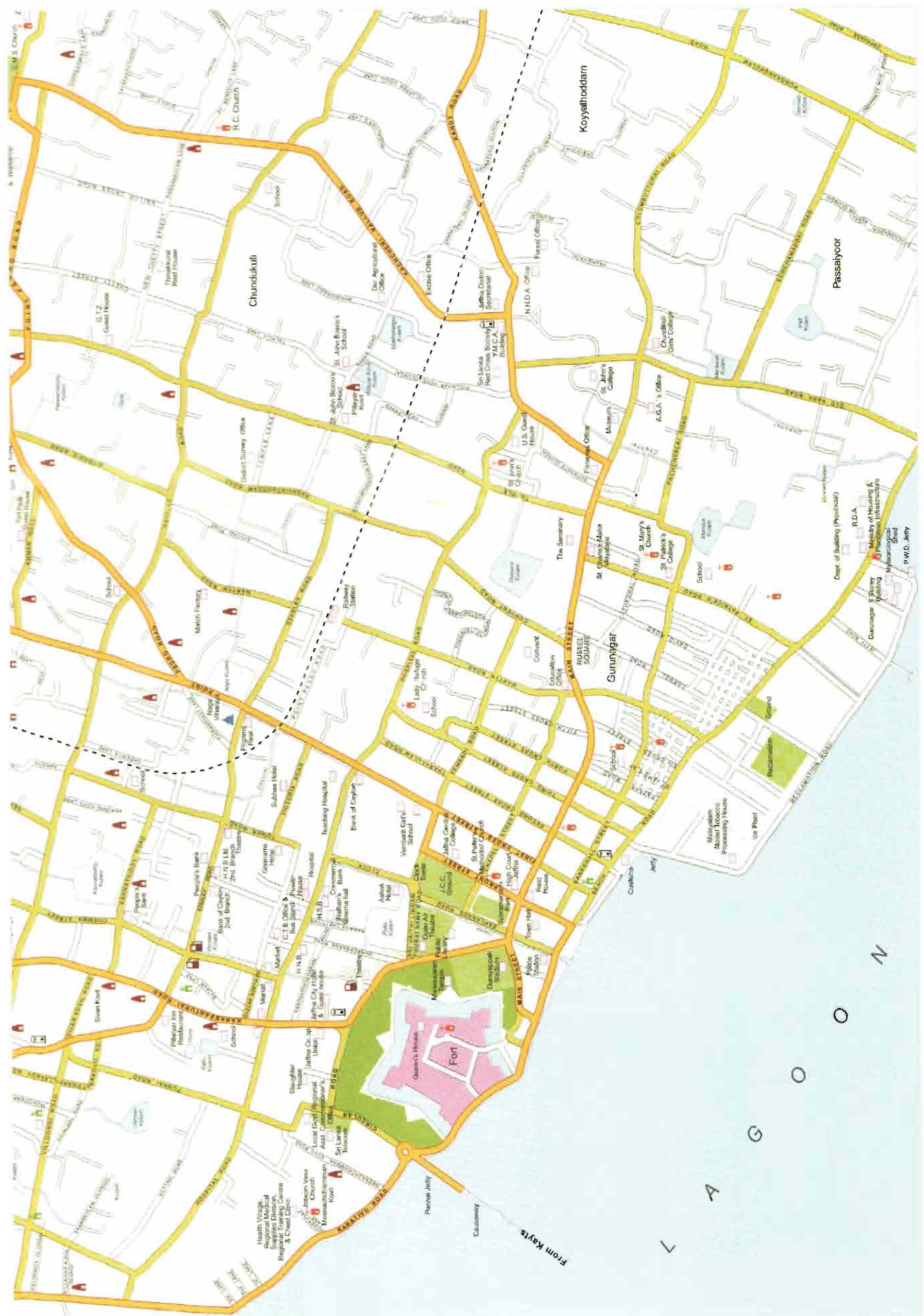
MAP OF SRI LANKA







JAFFNA TOWN



PHOTOS FOR RECORD

*Appearance of buildings shown prior to their upgrading*



Clockwise from top: Naga Pooshani Ambal Temple Nainativu (1962). Source - Maha Kumba Abishegam Malar (2012); Nallur Thirugnanasambanthar Aatheena Guru Moortham. Photo taken on 12 May 2011. A new building has been built at the same site; Selva Sannithy Temple. Source - Gnanasudar, a temple publication.

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# Glossary

## A

### Aadi

Tamil month (July/ August)

### Aadi Thapas

Penance performed in the Tamil month of Aadi (July/Aug) at Sankarancoil

### Aani

Tamil month (June/ July)

### Aagas

Saiva Sidhantha texts

### Aanava

Arrogance, pride

### Aavani

Tamil month (16th August–15th September)

### Abhishegam

Holy bathing of idols in temples

### Agni

Fire

### Ahankara

Pride, ego

### Aikyam

Union

### Aippasi

Tamil month (October/ November)

### Amalaki

A tree with round sour fruits

### Amman

Goddess Mother

### Andal

Consort of Ranganatha

### Anthiyeshti

Last rites

### Anugraha

Bestow grace

### Appar Adigal

Famous Tamil Saint

### Aradhana

Invoking God by chanting hymns and offering oblations.

Worshipping

### Archanai

Puja done in temples on the name and birth star of the devotee

### Ariya

Kings of Pandya dynasty

### Artha sama puja

Last puja for the day

### Arthanareeswarar

Idol portraying half man and half woman

### Arugampul

A kind of grass (Cynodon dactylon)

### Arul

Grace

### Arumugaswamy

Six headed Skantha

### Arupadai veedu

Six important temples dedicated to Subramanya

### Aruvam

Formless

### Aseervatham

Benediction. A solemn invocation of blessings divine on persons and things

### Ashram

Hermitage, usually used for penance, sadhana and education.

### Asura

Demon; evil person

### Atma

Soul

### Aum

Also spelt as "OM" – sound symbolizing the highest reality. It is chanted during meditation.

### Avatharam

Divine incarnation

### Ayilyam

One of 27 stars of Hindu astrology

### Ayutham

Weapon

### Azhwars / Alwars

The Vaishnavite Saints numbering 12

## B

### Balipeedam/

### Palipeedam

An inverted lotus shaped stone on top of a pedestal, situated

near the kodimaram in the temple

### Banasura

The demon by name Bana for whom Lord Siva worked as gate-keeper

### Bhagavadgita

Song of the divine one, Krishna; a celebrated philosophic epic inserted in Mahabharata.

### Bhajan

Congregatory mode of singing and uttering the name of God to glorify Him.

### Bhakti

Devotion to God

### Bhrigu

Son of Brahma, a great saint.

### Brahma

Name of one of the Gods of Hindu Trinity

### Brahmin

Highest caste in Hindu

### Brahmachari

Bachelor boy

### Brahmotsavam

Annual festival of the temple

### Budhan

The planet Mercury

## C

### **Camphor**

Aromatic white crystal from the wood of the camphor tree

### **Chakra**

The discus. The most powerful and the last weapon of Lord Vishnu for annihilation

### **Chakravathy**

Emperor

### **Chandikeswarar/ Sandeswarar**

Deity in Siva temples always in the pose of meditation. Pilgrims make a sound with their finger while worshipping him, to get themselves heard by him.

### **Chandran**

Moon

### **Cheras**

The Kerala Dynasty during which period the Cheras held power. They built temples but their empire disappeared after expansion in the 13th century

### **Chidambaram**

The temple of Natarajar in South India

### **Chitra Pournami**

Full moon day in the Tamil month of Chittirai

### **Chittirai**

Tamil month (April/ May)

## **Cholas**

The dynasty of kings who ruled portions of South India, mainly the present Trichy and Tanjore districts.

### **Circumambulate**

Going round the Lord is a part of Hindu custom when worshipping.

### **Conjeevaram (Kanchipuram)**

A sacred place of pilgrimage for Hindus, about fifty miles from Chennai.

## D

### **Dakshinayanam**

The period when the sun moves towards the southern hemisphere

### **Dasavatara**

Ten incarnations of Vishnu

### **Devaloka**

The abode of Devas

### **Devas**

Angels

### **Devi**

Goddess. The general name for all Goddesses esteemed as Mother.

### **Devi Sivakama**

### **Sundari**

The Goddess is split in three forms (as an ordinary devotee sees it), namely (in Sanskrit, icha Sakti, kriya Sakthi and Gnana Sakthi)

(i) Goddess who is ever ready to fulfill our desired and requests. (protection)

(ii) Goddess who is ever ready to undo the evil (destruction of evil and wicked)

(iii) Goddess who is ever ready to grant us wisdom and knowledge. (Bliss incarnate)

If one may say so, here Goddess Sivakama Sundari comes under the third category (to give us all the supreme bliss that one ultimately longs for, usually such a divine form is found deep inside the temple). Goddess of triumph of good over evil and wicked (Second category as seen above).

### **Dharma**

The Eternal Moral Law.

### **Dharshan**

Vision, revelation

### **Dheeparadhanai**

Aarathi / waving of an oil lamp or camphor

### **Dikshitar**

Name of a superior caste of Brahmins

who observed various religious vows.

### **Durga**

Also known as Goddess Kali

### **Dwajasthamba**

Flagstaff of the temple

## **Dwarapalakas**

Divine Sentinels, two in number found on either side of the entrance to the temple, invariably every big temple has these.

## G

### **Ganapathiar**

Who pray to Ganapathy, Elephant headed God

### **Ganesha**

Vinayaka

### **Garbagraham**

Sanctum Sanctorium (Holy of Holies)

### **Gnana**

Wisdom, sacred knowledge

### **Gnana Sakthi**

Power of knowledge

### **Golden Ratham**

Golden cart

### **Gopurams**

Towers of temples through which, from the four directions, the entrances lead to the sanctum sanctorum

### **Guru**

Religious teacher and spiritual guide

### **Guruwara**

Thursday

## H

### **Hindus**

People; living by Indus river

## Hinduism

Religion of Hindus

## Himalayas

The Highest mountain of the world whereon lie the Mount of Lord Siva. Hima means in Sanskrit, snow. Alaya means abode.

## Homa Kundam

A pit for making holy fire

## I

### Ichcha Sakti

Desire, will

### Idhikasam

Ancient epic

### Idol

Worshipping deity

### Indra

The King of Devas

### Indrani

The wife of Indra

### Iswara

God – mostly used for Siva

### Ishta Devathai

Chosen deity

## J

### Jeevaathma

Soul – the individual soul, self with limitation

### Jeevanmukta

One who has attained liberation while alive

### Jnana Sakti

Knowledge

### Jyothi

Flame; Effulgence of God

## K

### Kailasa paramparai

Siddar lineage from Nallur

### Kailayam

Abode of Lord Siva

### Kalasa

Metal or mud pot put on the top of gopurams

### Kali

Another name of Goddess Parvati in the aspect of annihilation

### Kali Yuga

The fourth of the Four Yugas, the current one

### Kapurala

Shaman who does pujas

### Kanyakumari

Virgin Goddess at Cape Comorin

### Karma

Action or work giving rise to reaction, thereby binding the doer

### Karthigai

Tamil month (November/December)

### Karthigai utsavam

Festival held during Karthigai

### Kartikeya

Another name of Subramanya brought up by Kritika nymphs

### Katiyam

Announcing the arrival of...

## Kasi

Benares (or Varanasi) on the banks of the Ganges river

## Kiriya

Worship according to the Agamas

## Kiriya Marga

Religious action, worship

## Kodi

The flag used for hoisting

## Kodimaram

Flag pole at the temple entrance

## Kodistambam

Sacred pillar in the temple used for hoisting the flag

## Kolam

Festive decor

## Kovil / Koil

Temple

## Krishna

One of the incarnations of Lord Narayana in Dwapara Yuga

## Krishna Paksha

The period of fourteen days between the full moon and new moon days

## Krita Yuga

The first of the Four Yugas

## Kshetra

Religious centre for pilgrims

## Kumbam

A pot of water adorned with a husked coconut and mango

leaves representing the deity

## Kumbham

Kalasam

## Kumba Abishegam

Ablutions of the towers of newly constructed or renovated temples with holy waters.

## Kumkumam

Auspicious red mark worn on forehead, made of tumeric and slaked lime

## Kurukkal

The chief priest in a temple

## Kuththu Vilakku

A standing lamp

## L

## Lagnam

Time

## Lakshmi

Goddess of Wealth and Consort of Maha Vishnu

## Lanka

Modern Ceylon, once the island kingdom of the demon king Ravana

## Leelai

Action of God in a sportive mood

## Lingam

A common form in which Lord Siva is worshipped

## Loka

Sphere

## M

### **Mahavishnu**

The Eternal God  
Narayana

### **Maha mandapam**

Large hall

### **Maha Shivarathri**

Staying awake to pray  
all night for Siva's  
grace.

### **Maheswaran**

Lord of illusion

### **Mahishasura**

The buffalo-headed  
demon killed by  
Goddess Durga

### **Mantra Sakti**

Power generated by  
holy incantation

### **Manickavasagar**

A Tamil religious Saint  
who composed quite  
a lot of Tamil hymns  
in praise of Lord Siva  
and his whole work  
goes by the name of  
"Thiruvagam"

### **Mandapam**

Open hall

### **Margazhi**

Tamil month  
(December/January)

### **Margazhi**

**Thiruvathirai**  
A festival held during  
December / January

### **Mariamman**

Another name for Kali

### **Masi**

Tamil month  
(February/March)

### **Masi Magam**

Festival held during  
February/March

### **Maya**

Illusion

### **Mayuram**

Peacock

### **Moksha**

Salvation

### **Moolasthanam**

Sanctum sanctorium

### **Moola moorthi**

Principal deity

### **Mudra**

Symbolic gesture

### **Mukti**

Salvation; liberation

### **Moorthy**

Idol / Deity  
permanently installed  
in the Sanctum

Sanctorium emanating  
spiritual powers

### **Murai**

Code of practice

### **Muruga**

Another name of Lord  
Subrahmanya

### **Murukku**

Palas tree

### **Muthukumaraswamy**

Saguna aspect of  
Kumaran

## N

### **Nadham**

Primordial Sound

### **Naga**

Serpent, cobra

### **Naivethya**

Offerings, oblation.

### **Nakshatram**

Star

### **Nanthavanam**

The holy garden

### **Nandi**

The Bull, mount of Siva

### **Narasimha**

The fourth incarnation  
of Vishnu, in the form  
of a man with a head  
of a lion

### **Narayana**

God, another name of  
Vishnu

### **Nathaswaram**

A pipe-like musical  
instrument

### **Navagrahas**

Nine deities  
representing the  
nine constellations,  
installed in temples.

### **Nayanmars**

Saivite saints, 63 in  
number

### **Neem**

Margosa tree (Vembu)

### **Netra**

Eye

### **New Year Day**

Mainly Tamil New Year  
Day corresponding to  
April 13 or 14

### **Nirutha Mandapam**

Reception hall

## O

### **Om**

The most sacred  
mantra of Siva

### **Omkaaram**

A name of God as the  
source of primal sound  
AUM

## P

### **Padma**

Lotus

### **Pathmavathy**

Consort of Lord  
Venkateswara  
at Tirupati.  
(Thiruchanoor)

### **Paksha**

Lunar fortnight

### **Panchakshara**

### **Mantra**

The five-lettered hymn  
"Namasivaya"

### **Pandyas**

The Pandyas of the  
Sangam age ruled  
from Madurai. There  
were two dynasties  
of this house. The first  
lasted until the 10th  
century when the  
Cholas overthrew it.  
Towards the end of  
the 12th, the Pandyas  
threw off the Chola  
yoke and held rule  
again till about the  
beginning of the 14th.  
Their great temple  
was the Sri Meenakshi  
Sundaresvara in  
Madurai, but their  
beneficence is felt in  
many other temple  
and in Tamil literature.

### **Panguni**

Tamil month (March/  
April)

### **Parvati**

Consort of Lord Siva

### **Pasupata Astra**

A powerful weapon of  
Lord Siva

### **Pattinathar**

A Saivite saint

### **Perumal**

Originally Vishnu; also

applied to other Gods

### **Pillaiyar**

Vinayaka

### **Poigai**

Pond; tank

### **Prakaram**

Wide corridors surrounding the sanctum sanctorum of a shrine; circum ambient passage

### **Puja**

Worshipping God chanting mantras

### **Puraanam**

Sacred narrative stories/religious stories

### **Poorana Kumbham**

Literally this is a vessel full of water with coconut and mango leaves, placed on grains of rice: beautifully decorated with flowers.

### **Purattasi**

Tamil month (September/October)

### **Pushkarani**

Sacred tank in a temple

## **R**

### **Rajagopuram**

The tower crowning the main entrance

### **Rakshasa**

Demon, evil spirit

### **Rama**

The sixth incarnation of Lord Narayana (Vishnu) as the son of Dasaratha

### **Ramanuja**

The great Vaishnavite

### **Ratham**

Temple car

### **Ravana**

The ten-headed king of Lanka, a demon killed by Sri Rama

### **Rishabham**

Holly bull; generally refers to Nandi

### **Rishi**

A seer

### **Roopam**

Form

### **Rudra**

Siva in His angry and fearful aspect

### **Rudraksham**

Spherical seeds made into garlands and worn by Saivites; berries of Usocarpus Granitrus sacred to Lord Siva.

## **S**

### **Sabha**

An assembly or meeting

### **Sadhana**

Spiritual discipline, penance

### **Saiva Agamas**

Sastras of temple worship

### **Saivite**

A person belonging to the cult of Lord Shiva worship

### **Sakti**

Energy; the female part of creation

### **Sani**

Saturn

### **Sannithanam**

Temple sanctum

### **Santaanagopalar**

Idol of Krishna as a baby, at Mannargudi

### **Samayachariyars**

The Saiva saints

### **Samadi**

Burial place of saint or yogi

### **Saraswati**

Goddess of learning, consort of Lord Brahma

### **Sastra**

Science; a scripture which lays down rules

### **Sekkilar**

A saivite Tamil poet

### **Siddhi**

Full attainment of spiritual realisation

### **Sishya**

Disciple

### **Sloka**

Verse in Sanskrit and the languages derived from it

### **Somaskanda**

Lord Subramanya as the child of Lord Shiva

### **Soorapathman**

A demon killed by Lord Subramanya

### **Sthala**

A holy or sacred place

### **Sthala Vriksha**

Sacred tree connected with the origin of a temple

### **Sthamba**

Flagstaff

### **Sthapathy**

Temple architect

### **Sthupi**

Upper portion of Vimanam

### **Sukla Paksha**

The period of 14 days between new moon and full moon days

### **Sukra**

Planet Venus

### **Surya**

Sun

### **Sthala puranas**

Each holy (sacred) place has its own anecdote as to why it is considered sacred. A temple is sacred but it is made all the more sacred for some reason associated with great souls and events

### **Swayambhu**

Self-created

## **T**

### **Thaanam**

Generosity, charity

### **Thai**

Tamil month (January / February)

### **Thakshana**

South

### **Thandam**

Stick

### **Thapas**

Ascetic practices

### **Tharisanam**

Vision, revelation

### **Tharpai / Kusa grass**

Sacrificial grass used in Hindu worship

**Thatchinamoorthy**

The ascetic pose of Lord Siva as a Guru, spiritual preceptor to all, always sitting facing South.

**Theekshai**

The blessings of Guru in order to lead a Saivite life

**Theepam**

Lamp

**Theertham**

Sacred tank of the temple

**Theivayanai**

Consort of Subrahmanya; daughter of Indra

**Thevaram**

A collection of Tamil songs (hymns) in praise of Lord Siva

**Thevasthanam**

Abode of the Divine

**Thirugnana****Sambanther**

One of the saivite saints

**Thirumurai**

Saivite Tamil literature. It is classified into 12 parts

**Thiruppathis**

Famous Vaishnavite temples numbering 108

**Thiruvarangam**

Otherwise called Sri Rangam. This is near Tiruchirapalli

**Thiruvacakam**

Songs in praise of Lord Siva composed by Saint Manickavasagar

**Thithi**

Lunar phase

**Thiyanam**

Meditation

**Thosham**

Evil influence, fault, defect, blemish, blight, sin, offence

**Thulasi**

Basil

**U****Utsavam**

Temple festival

**Utsavamoorthy**

Processional deity (Idol made of metals and are meant to be taken in a procession during festivals)

**V****Vahanam**

Carrier; usually in the shape of Rishabha, Simha, etc, over which the deity is placed and carried in procession

**Vaikasi**

Tamil month (May/ June)

**Vaikasi visakam**

Shanmuga's birthday

**Vaikunda**

Abode of Maha Vishnu

**Vairavar**

God of security

**Vaishnavite**

A person belonging to the cult of Vishnu worship

**Valli**

Consort of Lord

Subramanya

**Vamana**

The fifth avatara of Lord Narayana as a dwarfish Brahmin boy.

**Varaha**

The third avatara of Lord Narayana as a boar

**Vasudeva**

Lord Vishnu, the all-embracing; Krishna, son of Vasudeva

**Vayu**

Air as an element

**Vazhipadu**

Offering

**Veda**

The generic name for the most ancient sacred literature of the Hindus, consisting of the 4 collections: (1) Rig Veda (hymns to Gods), (2) Sama Veda (Priests' chants), (3) Yajur Veda (Sacrificial formulae in prose), (4) Atharva Veda (Magical chants)

**Veethi**

Street

**Vel**

Spear / lance

**Vibuthi**

Holy ash worn on the forehead. Every devotee of Lord Siva will be found wearing the holy ash on his forehead

**Vickneswara**

Vinayaga

**Vigrakam**

A body shaped icon

eminating spiritual powers

**Vilvam**

Aegle Marmelos, a tree sacred to Lord Siva. (Bael tree)

**Vimanam**

The small tower built over the sanctum sanctorum, richly decorated and often covered with gold plating.

**Vishnu**

God of protection

**Visvanathar**

Lord Siva

**Vratas**

Religious fasts

**W****Waning period of the moon (Thae pirai)**

Period from full moon to new moon

**Waxing period of the moon (Valar pirai)**

Period from new moon to full moon

**Y****Yaga**

Sacrifice, special puja with fire

**Yaga mandapam**

A place where yagas take place

**Yaga Salai**

At the time of festival, this place is used to install consecrated pots of water, when offering to the fire

(called Homa) is performed to add power to the Lord. The installed holy pot which is ultimately poured on the Lord on the last day. Chanting for 10 days adds dignity to the festival

**Yama**

God of death

**Yantra**

Symbolic figure

**Yatra**

Pilgrimage

**Yazh**

A musical instrument in those days

**Yoga**

Spiritual discipline

**Yogeswara**

Lord of Yoga

**Yogi**

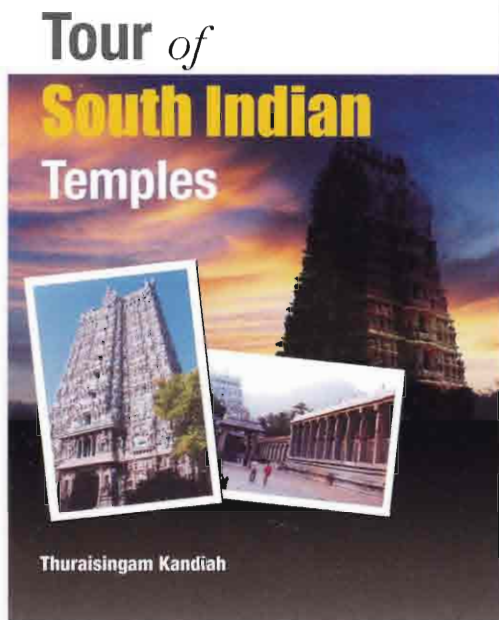
One versed in yoga

**Yugas**

The four ages or eras of the world.







The author's previous book:  
*Tour of South Indian Temples* (2009)

Front cover:  
 Keerimalai Sivan Temple.  
 Back cover:  
 Sri Veyilukantha Pillaiyar Temple, Nallur

## About the Author

The author, Mr. Thuraisingam Kandiah published his first book *Tour of South Indian Temples* in the year 2009. His current (second) publication focuses on the ancient Hindu temples of Sri Lanka.



These temples were mostly built during the era of Chola and Pandya rule, and later during the era of the Jaffna Tamil Kingdom.

The author was in the Government Service attached to Civil Defence Department, Malaysia, Ministry of Home Affairs. He was holding the post of Deputy Chief of Civil Defence before retiring in 1994.

Writing articles is one of his hobbies and it has little relevance to his professional career. While in service, however, he contributed articles to the in-house magazines published at ministerial and departmental levels. He was also a contributor of articles to the official journal of Institute of Civil Defence, United Kingdom – a professional body of international repute. He was accorded the 'member' grade by the Institute. He is also currently a 'chartered member' of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (Chartered MCIPD), United Kingdom.

As from 1996, he served in the Board of Management, Jaffnese Cooperative Society Ltd (JCS). He served as Hon. Secretary and later moved up to become the Vice Chairman before stepping down from the Board in 2011. During the tenure of his 15 years service with JCS and even presently he is a regular contributor of articles to *Pathfinder*, the official magazine of the society.

Over the years of his involvement as a writer, he has acquired the writing skills to a desired level.

He then decided to optimise the usage of his free time and hence the publication of this book.



*Dr. Paul E. Peiris, a Singhalese ethnologist and antiquarian of international repute has pointed out to the five 'eeswarams' (Saivite Shrines) on the four cardinal points of the compass located on the shore-line of Ceylon pre-dating the birth of Buddha as evidence of the Tamil habitation of the island.*

