

The Festivals and Thirthas of Tiruvanaikka Temple

¹G.Karthick, ²Dr.D.Gangatharan

¹Research Scholar, Karpagam University, Coimbatore-21, Tamilnadu, India

²Reader & Head, Arulmigu Palaniandavar Arts and Culture College, Palani, India

Abstract: As in all other Hindu temples, the Tiruvanaikka temple also has daily rituals, a host of colourful monthly and annual festivals. We shall see the significance of all the festivals in this paper. The Chitrai festival is celebrated in the first month of every Tamil Year. It is held for only one day, on full moon night. The Second important festival is celebrated in the month of Vaikasi on every Tamil Year. It is held for ten days. It is popularly known as Vasanthautsavam. Thiruvanaikka puranam represents the Holy nine (NAVA) Thirthas which are Srimath Thirtham, Agastya Thirtham, Jambu Thirtham, Indra Thirtham, Surya Thirtham, Rama Thirtham, and Chandra Pushjarani.

Keywords: Tiruvanaikka Temple, Nine Thirthas, Chitrai Festival.

1. INTRODUCTION

As in all other Hindu temples, the Tiruvanaikka temple also has daily rituals, a host of colourful monthly and annual festivals. We shall see the significance of all the festivals in this paper.

2. DAILY RITUALS

Of them are *mid-day puja* is remarkable. The Mid-day puja, as it is conducted to-day(12-10-14)begins as usual at 12 A.M. The priest incharge of doing *puja* for Lord siva goes to the temple of the Goddess. He wears a saree with a crown on his head. He holds a vessel in his hand.

- (1) '*Ushathakalam*' : 6.00 -6.30 A.M
- (2) '*Kalasanthi*' : 8.00-8.30 A.M
- (3) '*Uchikalam*' : 12.00-12.30 A.M
- (4) '*Sayarshai*' : 5.00-5.30 A.M
- (5) '*Erandakalam*' : 7.00-7.30 P.M
- (6) '*Ardhajamam*' : 8.30-9.00 P.M

Containing the holy things for performing ablution. He then proceeds to the Lord's temple in a procession, led by the usual Nathaswara music. The priest imagines himself as Akilandeswari and performs the various rites of *puja*. Along with it the worship of a cow is something peculiar here. This is a daily feature of the worship in the temple. The daily worship is carried out by brahmin priests who are residents of the north street. The priests of this temple are called '*Pandits*'.

3. MONTHLY FESTIVALS

The Hindus usually follow the Lunar Calendar for their religious purposes. To them every full moon is holy to the Gods and every new moon is holy to their ancestors. So, the entire Hindu temple observe extra *pujas* with festive pomp on every full moon day. Besides these certain aspects between and sun and moon are also considered holy. Thus the thirteen

days from every new moon and full moon are called *Pardoshakalam* Considered to be sacred to Lord Siva. The Most Important is called Panchaprakara festival. It is the longest which is inaugurated in the month of 'Masi'. It is spread over a period of forty days. It comes to an end in the month of 'Punguni'. It is celebrated as follows:

Pittu Festival	- One day
Vinayaka and Muruga	- Five Days
For the four Nayanmars	- Three days
Chandrasekarar	- Six Days
Somakandar	- Ten days
Kalyanasundaramurthy	- Three Days
Chokkesar	- Three days
Silent Festival (Maruvana Festival)	- Three Days
Chandekeswarar	-Three Days
Panchaprakara	- One day
Mandalabishekam	- One day
Vidayarri	- One day

There is also a legend behind this festival. Brahma the creator dominated by egoism created a beautiful maiden. He lost himself in her beauty. He lost His Creative power. Worldly life got affected, and human beings went of retrace. The world ceased to function. So, He came down to this world to worship God Siva. Brahma went from temple to temple and at last He came to Jambuvanam. He constructed a small tank and performed 'Yoga'. God Siva disguised Himself as Parvathi and Parvathi in the form of God appeared before Brahma. Brahma Prostrated and Prayed. He was granted the power of creation. The Place where Brahma did His penance, and the nearby tank are still there, and it goes by the name "*Brahma Thirtham*". As the chief festival which is held for forty days is related to Brahma, it is called "*Brahmautsavam*". On the night of the last day festival, the God in the role of the Goddess and the Goddess in the role of the god are taken in procession through all the Five *Prakaras*. Music Performance and lectures on religious subjects are special features of this festival.

The *Chitrai* (April) festival is celebrated in the first month of every Tamil Year. It is held for only one day, on full moon night. During the day time the priests read the new almanac, conduct New Year Celebration.

The second important festival is celebrated in the month of "*Vaikasi*" (May) on every Tamil Year. It is held for ten days. It is popularly known as *Vasanthautsavam*. It is celebrated in the Vasantha Mandapa of the third Prakara. Milk, Mango and Rice *abisheka* is performed on the day previous to full moon day.

The third public celebration worthy to be noted is *Ani Thirumanjanam* (JUNE). On this day the idol of Lord Natarajar is taken in Procession. On the fullmoonday the three fruits abisheka (Mango, jack fruit and banana) is performed. It is held for ten days.

The Fourth one is the famous *Adiporam* Festival (JULY) which is held for ten days. The tenth day is called floating festival day which is performed in *suryathirtham*. Flag hoisting festival is held in "*Adikirthigal*" and the Procession of Sri Balathandayuthapani on the pearl palangin is also performed on the same starday. The Priest dressed in a silk saree offers Puja to the Goddess, to the Goddess in the bed chamber and the Goddess who is taken out in procession. *Pooram* worship is meant for Virgins.

Pittu festival is held in the month of 'Avani' (AUGUST) There is also a legend about this festival. Once the Lord worked as a labourer. He carried basket loads of sands. The old lady who hired him was so poor. So, She gave a small quantity of *Pittu* to Him, in lieu of His wage. *Navarathiri* festival is held in the Tamil month of *Purattasi* (SEPTEMBER) for ten days. Dance and Music performances and religious discourses are a special feature of this festival. The idol of somaskandar with swami and Amman on either side is taken out in procession.

Kandarasashti festival is celebrated in the Tamil month of "Aippasi" (OCTOBER) for six days. *Vibhuthi abisheka is Performed in the Vibhuthi Thirumaligai*, Which was renovated by Thiruneerittan Sundara Pandyan (Maravarman Sundara I Pandya)? According to tradition Lord Siva presented holy ash and created this building. In memory of that incident this *Vibhuthi abisheka* is performed there.

Another important festival celebrated here is the Karthigai (November) festival. It comes on the Karthigai starday in the Tamil month of *Karthigai*. It is celebrated not only in this temple, but also in all other temples. This festival is held for eleven days. Conch *Abisheka* (1008) Conches) is performed on every *Somavara* day(i.e) Monday. The eighth day is observed as *Karthigai Deepam* festival.

Manikkavasagar festival is celebrated in the month of "Margali" on Thiruvadhira starday. On this day the idol of Lord Nataraja in the second *Prakara* is taken out in procession to the thousand Pillared mandapa and *abisheka* is performed there. *Aruthra Dharishanam* also takes place on the same day.

Famous *Thaipooasam* festival is held for ten days in the month of "Thai" (JANUARY). It is celebrated in honour of Lord Nataraja. Rishabamount and lion mount Nataraja is taken out for procession. Floating festival of Lord Jabukkeswarar is performed in "Ramathirtham". Honey abisheka for Lord Jambukeswarar is performed on the full moon day.

A festival in honour of Ko- Chenganan is held in the month of masi (FEBRUARY). The festival comes on the sathaya starday. The idol of Chenganan one of the sixty three nayanmars is worshipped in a shrine in the *Iyyanmandapa* newly built for him.

There is also a festival in honour of saints like St. Appar, St Sundarar, St Sambandar and it is known as Masimaham festival. Other notable festivals of this month are festival of Ganapathy Subarmanyam, and the festival of Kalyanasundara- murthy. The month of Panguni (MARCH) is noted for the car festival.

4. THE NINE THIRTHAS OF TIRUVANAICKA TEMPLE

Thiruvanaikka puranam represents the Holy nine (Nava) *thirthas* in the following way:

"Kamaru Brama Thirtham Indhira Putkaraniyea sambu putkarani Themali Ramatheerthamea Seethamath Thithamea akkini Thirtha Mama kathiyanarka Thirthamea soma Theerthamea alariyin Thirtham Vazha mega laiyaymelavanth Thirtham Maruviya peyaririvai kandi"

Besides the Holy Rivers of the Cauvery and the Kollidam, there are nine Holy tanks in this temple.

(i) SRIMATH THIRTHAM:

The Holy tank around the main deity (Appulinga) in the Sanctum Sanctorum is called as *Srimath* Thirtham. During the rainy days the whole of the Sanctumsanctorum continuously will be full water and priests will be continuously draining it.

(ii) AGASTYA THIRTHAM:

It is close to the bed chamber of the Amman Shrine. It is a well in the northeast corner of the first *Prakara* of the Amman Shrine. Agnithirtham is a well in the south- eastern corner of the third *prakara* of the God's Shrine.

(iii) JAMBU THIRTHAM:

This is a tank on the southern side of the Sankareswarar Shrine, and in front of the Adi Jambukeswarar shrine inside the Sankareswarar *Gopura* of the third *Prakara*. The Lower steps of this thirtham has the holiness of the Srirangam temple Thirtham. This tank is flanked with walls on all sides. Jambukeswarar is on its western bank. The idol of Lord Muruga is seen on the steps on the eastern side. Arunagirunathar has sung in praise of this God.

(iv) INDRA THIRTHAM:

This is a tank Situated south of the flagmast close to the temples of Vinayaka and Subramaniya in the Meenakshi Mandapa of the third *Prakara*. It is on the western border of the Muvar temple. It has steps on the northern side. Its area is about hundred and twenty square feet. There is granite pavement on all the sides. During rains, Surplus water is drained through a drain on the northern side of the tank. The water of the tank is covered with moss. Many come to have a holy dip in the tank and worship kasivisvanathar.

(v) SURYA THIRTHAM:

This tank is the biggest of all the tanks. It is situated south of the thousand pillared *mandapa* in the third Prakra. In the month of Adi, the famous *Adipooram* festival is celebrated every year in this rank. *Brama Thirtham* is the inner tank situated in the south street of the fourth *prakara* of the God's Shrine.

(vi) Rama Thirtham:

This is a big tank dug by Sri Rama on the western side of the present temple, to get himself rid of the sin of killing kumbakarna. Karimaleeswaram temple was built by Sri Ramar on the western bank of this tank. This tank is just west of the Trichy-Madras highway. Every year in the month of "Thai" The floating festival of God Jambukeswarar and Akilandeswari is celebrated in this tank.

(vii) Chandra Pushjarani:

One of nine holy tanks attached to the Anaikka temple is located at Srirangam. It is located in the Srirangam temple on the way of Amman temple between the Shrines of Sri Rama and Dhanvantri close to the 'Gates of Heaven'. Its lowest steps have some divine link with Thiruvanaika. *Jambu Thirtham*, *Indra Thirtham*, *Surya Thirtham* and *Brahma Thirtham* were cleaned during the Kumbabishekam of 1970. These tanks which are already sweeter and cooler now became the *coolest* and the sweetest. It is believed that they have the healing power.

5. CONCLUSION

The Hindus usually follow the Lunar Calendar for their religious purposes. There is also a legend behind this festival. Brahma the creator dominated by egoism created a beautiful maiden. The Chitrai is the famous festival celebrated in the first month of every Tamil Year. Music Performance and lectures on religious subjects are special features in this festival. Thiruvanaikka puranam represents the Holy nine (NAVA) Thirthas.

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