

## Sthala puranam of Malai nattu divya desams

### **THIRUVITHUVACODE STHALAPURANAM:**

- 1) Ambarisha maharaja did severe penance to the Lord and as desired by the king, the Lord appeared in 4 Forms, Para, Vyuha, Archa and forms. Perumal is thus seen as Vasudeva, Aniruddha, Pradyumna.
- 2) When Pandavas set on theertha yatra to atone for the sin committed by killing their relatives during Mahabharatha war, they visited this place. Hearing about the holiness of this place, they stayed here and worshipped Perumal in all the 4 forms. Each idol was worshipped by Yudhistira, one by Bhima, one by Arjuna and one by Nakula and Sahadeva.
- 3) Story of Siva Linga in the temple : A brahmin who was a staunch Saivite stayed at Kasi and offered worship to Lord Visweswara. He was forced to leave Kashi and come to his native place as he heard that his mother was in her last stages and as he was reluctant to leave his Ishtadevata, he prayed to Lord Siva for help. Lord Siva entered into the umbrella which the brahmin used to have with him always. When the brahmin reached this place, it was evening. As he had to perform his evening rites, he left the umbrella in the temple premises and went to have bath. When he returned, he found that he could not lift the umbrella and when he exerted force, the umbrella broke and a Siva ling emerged out of it. Lord Siva told the brahmin that henceforth He would stay there and all the devotees could worship Him in that place. Hence, we can find a Siva Linga in the temple premises which is a Swayambhu.

### **Guruvayur STHALA PURANAM :**

GURUVAYOOR, the sacred shrine of Lord Krishna attracts lakhs of devotees every year. This is one of the most famous pilgrimage centers like Sri rangam, Tirupati , Puri etc. Like Puri, this is also not a divya desam but it is an ABHIMANA STHALAM". The idol of the Lord Guruvayurappan was worshipped by Lord Krishna Himself. To set an example to everyone, Lord Krishna used to perform nitya thiruvaaradhanai to His own image and preached the world to perform pooja to their ishta devata. When Dwapara yugam was coming to an end, Krishna asked Udhava, one of his greatest devotees to take care of the vigraham when He left this mortal world. He also advised Udhava to take the help of Guru in locating a suitable place for worship. As Dwaraka was to submerge, the idol had to be removed from that place. . As ordered, Guru and Vayu took the idol and after a long search, they reached the present Guruvayur and placed the idol for worship. They were guided by Parasurama in locating a suitable place for worship. Lord Parasurama took them to a tank full of lotus flowers. It may be mentioned here that at that time, the place was occupied by Lord Shiva and His consort. Originally there was a temple dedicated to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva, out of his abundant devotion to Perumal moved from that place to Maamiyur and a temple was constructed for Perumal by Viswakarma, the divine architect. As Perumal was brought by Guru and Vayu, He came to be

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known as GURUVAYOORAPPAN and the place came to be known as GURUVAYOOR. The pilgrimage to this holy shrine will be considered to be complete only after one visits the Maamiyur temple. It was here that the famous "NARAYANEEYAM" was composed by Sri Narayana Bhattar. It may be recalled that Sri narayana bhattar's guru was suffering from serious ailment and Narayaan Bhattar, who could not see the pitiable condition of his guru took over the ailment. The Bhattar who was very kind enough to take over his guru's ailments and as he was unable to move, he requested his co-sishyas to take him to Guruvayoorappan's sannidhi. There, sitting in front of the Lord, he composed Narayaneeyam in which the Bhattar brings out the essence of Srimad Bhagavatham and requests the Lord to cure his ailment. There is a big photograph of Bhattar and we were shown the place where the NARAYANEEYAM was composed.

**A BRIEF NOTE ABOUT THE TEMPLE PROCEEDINGS:** The archakar known as "MELSANTHI" gets up at 2.30 A.M. in the morning and having completing morning rites, enters into the temple and opens the door of "SRIKOVIL" The garbagriham is called as "SRIKOVIL" in Kerala. Devotees have bath in the temple pushkarini and wait to have Viswaroopa darshan (the first darshan of the Lord) which is known as NIRMALAYA. Then, the previous day's garlands etc. are removed and Lord is given "THAILA ABHISHEKAM". This thailam has lots of medicinal properties and one's ailments will get cured if one consumes a drop of this thailam. But nowadays, to meet the demand of the devotees, the thailam is mixed with gingelly oil. After applying thailam, the priest applies VAKA, a powder on Lord's thirumeni and this is dusted off. Then Lord is given abhishekam with holy water. Then Malar (putted rice, jaggery and Kadalipazham) are offered to Perumal. Then Usha Pooja is performed. At this time, Perumal is offered butter, sugar, banana etc. This is the end of first pooja.

The second pooja starts at sun rise and this is called as "ETHIRUTHU POOJA". When this pooja is performed in the Srikovil, Ganapathi Homam is performed in the kitchen and other deities like Ganapathy, Sastha and Bhagavathi are attended to. Then Siveli (offering to the Lord's attendants) is performed. As the Lord is always taken care of by his attendants, it becomes our moral responsibility to take care of these attendants (bali peetams). The utsava vigraham of the Lord is taken out in procession seated on an elephant and Lord personally supervises the neivedhyam to the bali peetams. White neivedyam is offered to the bali peetams. These bali peetams signify various divine powers. It may be noted that this procedure is followed in all Kerala temples. There is a separate utsava murthi for this purpose and the procession is taken out with mela, thaalam etc.

After Siveli, abhishekam milk, tender coconut water, rose water etc. is performed for the Lord. Water is brought from temple well, filled in 9 golden pots, duly sanctified. After this, Perumal is adorned with Chandana Kaapu and dressed like

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Bala Krishna. This is the most attractive form of Perumal and people eagerly wait to have darshan in this form.

Between 8 and 9 A.M., the PANTHEERADI POOJA is performed. This pooja is conducted when the shadow is 12 feet long. This is performed by Tanthri as at this time, the Melsanthi goes to take rest.

At noon, the UCHCHA POOJA is performed. This is done elaborately as at this time, the Lord and His attendants are worshipped and neivedyam is offered. One interesting feature in this temple is at the time when the neivedyam is offered to Perumal in Srikovil, a brahmin is sumptuously fed in the kitchen. This Brahmin is considered as Lord's representative and is treated well. When this pooja is performed, Astapadi is sung. After this, the temple closes at 13.00 hours.

The temple re-opens at 4.30 P.M. As in the morning, Siveli is performed and Lord is seated on the back of an elephant. In the evening, DEEPARADHANA is performed when all the lights are lit in the temple. Perumal is worshipped with oil lamps and camphor flames. At this time, even from a very long distance, the darshan of Perumal can be had to heart's content. This is one of the spectacular sights not to be missed. After an hour of Deeparadhana, the ATHAZA POOJA is performed. At this time, Appam, Ada, beetel leaves and arecanut are offered to the Lord. This is followed by the last Siveli of the day. After this, the temple is fumigated with nine sweet smelling gums kept on a silver tray. After this, the daily accounts are loudly read out and submitted to the Lord. It may be noted that the system of submitting accounts to Perumal is followed even in Tirumala during morning hours known as KOLUVA. In Tirumala, the accounts are read out to Koluva Srinivasar who will be seated on a chair.

Thus, 12 poojas are performed to Perumal everyday and having bath in the pushkarini, eating prasadam and worshipping all the 12 poojas is extremely good for any individual as it elevates the mind and saves him from sins.

The major festivals performed in this temple are Ekadasi, Narayaneeyam day, Vishu, Ashtami Rohini (Janmaashtami), Chembai Music Festival and Vaisakha.

There are 2 entrances to the temple one on the eastern side and one on the western side.

There are many lodges in this town and there are lodges administered by the temple trustees known as "DEWASWOM LODGES" In case one wants to stay in DEWASWOM LODGES, the booking for the same must be done well in advance. The private lodges are bit costly.

**STHALAPURANAM OF THIRUNAAVAI:** Let me brief about the sthalapuranam relating to this place.

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- 1) Perumal is always known for His Vaatsalya guna . Goddess Mahalakshmi and Gajendra used to offer lotus flowers for worshipping Perumal. As Thayar would pluck the flowers for aaradhana daily before Gajendran, the elephant got dejected and approached Perumal and told that henceforth it had to go elsewhere to get lotuses for Perumal. As Perumal did not want his devotee to get dejected, He appeared before Goddess Mahalakshmi and Gajendran and said that Thayar could be with Him and accept the offerings made by Gajendran. Hence, only in this Malai Naadu divya desam, there is a separate shrine for Thayar.
- 2) NAVAYOGIS : There were 9 siddha yogis who would always be together and offer worship and meditate on Lord. In due course, 8 yogis attained moksha and the vighrams worshipped by them also disappeared and as a result of this, the ninth yogi got dejected and stopped offering worship to Perumal. When questioned by Perumal, he said that he was missing his companions and Perumal with his maya showed the 8 yogis. The 8 yogis agreed to stay there but said that they would be invisible to human eyes and the 9<sup>th</sup> yogi could feel their presence. In due course, the 9<sup>th</sup> yogi requested Perumal to make him also invisible. But Perumal insisted that the vighram worshipped by the 9<sup>th</sup> yogi must be kept there itself and Perumal blessed the 9 yogis saying that they could offer worship to Him at that place forever. Hence, what we see now is the vighram worshipped by the 9<sup>th</sup> yogi.
- 3) PERUMAL'S THIRUMENI: It is a usual practice that after installing an idol in the temple, the Srikovil would remain closed for 7 days with the belief that the devas would offer pooja to the idol. In this temple, first a vighram was installed and the Srikovil was kept closed for 7 days. But when the doors opened, they were shocked to see the idol missing. They again brought another idol and the idol disappeared. This went on for 8 times and on the 9<sup>th</sup> time, out of curiosity, when they opened the temple doors before the scheduled time , they were shocked to see that the idol had descended into the earth upto the knee. To prevent further descent of the idol, They immediately chanted various mantras and saw to it that the idol did not descend further. It is believed that when the idol would descend into the earth, Kaliyuga will come to an end.(Pralaya will take place).
- 4) MARKANDEYA : It is a well known story that Markandeya was destined to die at a very young age. When Lord Yama came to take his life, the little boy ran into this temple and prayed to Perumal to save him. Perumal appeared before the boy and gave him a Siva linga for worship and advised the boy to escape from the backside entrance. He assured that Lord Siva would take care of him. As soon as Markandeya escaped from the backside, Perumal placed a big stone and closed the way permanently and ensured that Yama could not enter the way. In this way, Perumal saved Markandeya's life. To this day, the door behind Perumal remains closed.
- 5) Behind the idol of Perumal, there is a bottomless pit. A pujari who attempted to find the depth of the pit by putting his ring which was tied to a

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long string lost his ring but could not find the depth of that pit. It is believed that the 8 idols which were installed earlier disappeared through this pit only.

- 6) By the side of the shrine, there is a small slab which is not cemented. But it lies as it is though many centuries have passed by. It is believed that the slab covers an opening to a tunnel.
- 7) There is a shrine for Lord Vigneswara on the south.
- 8) MAHAMAGAM: Like in Kumbakonam, this festival used to be celebrated for 30 days starting on Thai Poosam and ending on Masi Magam. It is believed that various holy rivers like Ganges, Yamuna etc. would mingle with the waters of Bharatpuzha and make it more holier. It is worth mentioning here that Bharatpuzha is the longest river and it is treated on par with Ganges in this state.

### **THIRUMOOZHICALAM**

#### STHALAPURANAM IN BRIEF:

- 1) In Kerala, the Vishnu idols are treated as idols of Rama or his brothers or Krishna. Even though Vishnu icons are seen with 4 arms with conch, chakra, gada and lotus and not with bow and arrow, they still treat is as Rama. We may find that all the Mali Naadu divya desams have sthalapuram connected with Ramavatar/ Krishnaavataar/ Pandavas. This temple is related to the episode in Ramayanam wherein Lakshmana suspects the integrity of Bharata when Bharata comes to Chitrakootam. During Rama rajyam, it is well known that Rama and his brothers used to go incognito to find out the people's problems. Once Lakshmana had come down south to find out about the welfare of the citizens and he arrived at Haritha Maharishi's hermitage. When Lakshmana asked about any shortcomings, Haritha Maharishi advised him to first realize his mistake and atone for his sin(The rishi was referring to Lakshmana's suspicion about Bharata). Lakshmana stayed in that place and was regretting for his sin. After few days, Bharata came to the same place and Lakshmana fell at the feet of Bharata and asked for forgiveness.. Lakshmana and Bharata exchanged sweet words . Hence, this place came to be known as THIRUMOOZHICALAM.
- 2) Haritha Maharishi laid down the principles of Varanasrama dharma, basic tenets of Thiru mantram, Sri sookthi and yoga and these were duly approved by Perumal Himself. Hence, Perumal came to be known as SRI SOOKTHINATHAR. It is said that Perumal used to act like a father and explained the meaning of the mantra and initiated people . Hence, Perumal here is known as Appan.
- 3) As mentioned earlier, 2 arms are broken and a leg is fractured due to the massacre of Tippu Sultan. A silver angi was made to cover the body of Perumal. But the next day itself , a thief came and removed the angi but left it near the compound wall. It may be mentioned here that Keralites

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believe in Astrology and when the astrological readings were made to find out the cause of theft, they understood that Perumal was not interested in angi. From that time onwards, the angi is just kept aside without adorning Perumal.

- 4) In this temple, there are 2 shrines (one on the left side and one in the middle of the temple yard) dedicated to Lord Rama along with Sita Devi and Lakshmana and a shrine dedicated to Gosala Krishna respectively. Though the icons are not there in these 2 sannidhis, people believe that the vigrahams were there earlier and even today neivedhyam is offered to these vigrahams. We can only see the name boards in front of these sannidhis.
- 5) Like many malai naadu temples, even in this temple there is a shrine for Ganapathy.
- 6) With the intention of installing a diety named "VETTAKORUMAGAN" from Padamuttam, the temple authorities constructed a shrine but as the astrological readings predicted that the idol was unwilling to shift from Padamuttam, the consecration ceremony did not take place.

Hence, we can find that there are in total 3 shrines without any vigraham .

### **THIRUKATKARAI : STHALAPURANAM IN BRIEF:**

1)Thirukarkarai is known as "VAMANA KSHETRAM"- It means the Holy place where Lord placed His foot. The story is closely linked with the story of Mahabali and Perumal's Trivikrama avataaram . THIRUKAATKARAI is Vaamana kshetram. It was here that Bali was performing yaga and the story that Perumal came as a small boy (vamanan) is too well known to bear repetition. A brief mention about the temples connected with Thiruvikrama episode, the temples connected are as follows:

#### DESCRIPTION

##### TEMPLE

Perumal comes in the form of Vaamanan and asks for 3 feet of land  
THIRUKAATKARAI (Malai Naadu)

Perumal measures the universe with His first foot  
SIRKAZHI TEMPLE (Chola Nadu)

Perumal measures the heavens with His second foot  
THIRUKOVALUR (Nadu Naadu)

Perumal places the 3<sup>rd</sup> foot on Bali  
ULAGALANDHA PERUMAL

At KANCHI (Thondai Naadu)

TEMPLE

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2) Kapila maharishi did penance here and Perumal pleased with the rishi's penance appeared before the rishi. At the behest of the rishi, Perumal decided to stay in this place.

3) Story relating to Nendram pazham (a type of banana) : A farmer prayed to Perumal that he would present Perumal with a bunch of golden bananas if his plantation yielded fruits. Accordingly, Perumal blessed the land and there was a heavy yield of Kadalipazham. Because the netram of Perumal (Perumal's glance/His benign grace) fell on the plantation, it came to be known as "NENDRANGA KADALIPAZHAM". The farmer kept up his promise by making golden bananas and at the behest of the priest he left the bunch of golden bananas outside the Srikovil (Garbagriham) and left the place. When the priest returned after having bath, he was shocked to see the bunch missing. As only a yogi was present there, he suspected the yogi and the matter was reported to the king. People started accusing the yogi for the theft. Next day, when the pujari performed Thirumanjanam to the Lord, he observed that the abshikem water was getting stagnated . This was because the drain hole was blocked with the golden bunch of bananas. The pujari realized his mistake and the king and others along with the pujari approached the rishi for forgiveness. But the humiliated rishi before committing suicide cursed them that they would lose their wealth and that his curse would end only after the town lost all its wealth. Accordingly, the town lost all its riches . The yogi became a brahma rakshasa due to his untimely death and the people to protect themselves from the wrath of the brahma rakshasa constructed a small shrine and offered prayers to him. Even today, after neivedyam is offered to Perumal, the same is offered to the brahma rakshasa. This shrine is just outside Perumal's sannidhi.

### **THIRUVARANVILAI:**

#### STHALAPURANAM IN BRIEF:

- 1) Originally the vigraham was in a place known as NILAKKAL NARAYANAPURAM in the midst of a forest. As Perumal decided to move on to another place, he disguised Himself in the form of a young brahmachari like Vaamanan holding an umbrella and a stick in His hand. Perumal requested some boatmen to make a barge (raft) for Him. Looking at the thejus of Bhagawan, the boatmen conceded His request. In the evening , the brahmachari alighted at a place presently known as IDAYAARAMULA (in between Aaramula) for offering His evening prayers. Looking at the bright effulgence on the brahmachari's face, the local people lighted a lamp to enable the brahmachari to offer His prayers and this place is now known as VILAKAKUMUDAM. From there, the brahmachari proceeded further and reached the banks of Pampa river. As it was already dark, the brahmachari decided to stay there. As it was a low level area, the brahmachari who was Perumal Himself ordered the rakshasas present there to raise the level of the ground and construct a

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temple. The place from where the mud was dug in order to raise the level of the temple is known as OOTUKUZH. The construction of the temple was completed overnight. From that day onwards, Perumal stayed in that place. As Perumal came in a raft made of 6 bamboos (mula), He came to be known as AARAMULA. In the place where Perumal left the raft made of bamboos, a thick bamboo grove started growing

- 2) Even today, when utsavam is performed for 10 days in the month of Makham(November), the chief priest goes to the place where the bamboos grew out of the barge to bring a bamboo for hoisting temple flag. This marks the beginning of the utsavam and this system is followed even today.
- 3) The face of the Perumal depicts Perumal's vaatsalya gunam towards His devotees. This reminds us of the incident in Mahabharata when Krishna who had promised that He would not use any ayudham during the war, rushed towards Bheeshma holding a chariot's wheel like Sudarshana Chakram in order to save Arjuna from Bheeshma's shower of arrows. At that time, Bhisma Pithamaha praised Krishna for His Vaatsalya gunam towards His devotees and was ready to die in the hands of Perumal. The thirumukham of the Perumal at Aaramula depicts this incident.
- 4) As stated in the introduction about Malai Naadu divya desams, the idols here are connected to stories relating to Ramayanam, Mahabharatham. It is believed that this vigraham was consecrated by Arjuna and he used to offer worship to this Perumal in order to gain mental peace after the great Mahabharata war was over. Arjuna felt guilty that he killed Karna when the latter's chariot got stuck during the war. Though Karna had requested him to give time, Arjuna at the behest of Krishna killed him. Arjuna felt guilty that he did not concede Karna's request and killed him brutally. To attain mental peace, after the Mahabharata war was over, the repentant Pandava brothers prayed to Perumal at different places for praayachittham. Arjuna prayed to Perumal at Thiruvichikode and at this place.
- 5) There was a Mangad family who used to go celebrate Onam after feeding sumptuously the Brahmins. It happened that on one particular Onam day, no Brahmin turned up to take bhiksha. The devote head of the family prayed to Perumal sincerely to send some Brahmin so that he could feed the Brahmin on that festive day. Perumal conceded the request of the chief and came as a young brahmachari. The overwhelmed Mangad head fed the brahmachari and thanked Perumal. That night, Lord appeared in his dream and asked him to send neivedhyam to Aramula temple itself from next year onwards. From the next year, the Mangad family used to take neivedyam to Aramula temple and celebrate Onam there itself. Once they got a news that some evil forces were planning to way lay the provisions. To protect the Mangad family procession, the neighbouring villagers came in separate rafts and surrounded the main raft and gave protection. This slowly turned into a race and the boat was shaped in the

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form of a snake. Thus the world famous snake boat race commenced and this is carried out even today.

- 6) During Meena masam (Mar-April), another utsavam is performed wherein the Goddess from the neighbouring village known as Punnamthode is brought to the banks of Pampa river and Aaratu is performed. At that time, Perumal comes out on Garuda vahanam and both Perumal and Ambal are worshipped together. After this ritual, Ambal leaves for her place.
- 7) The Perumal here is treated as Lord Krishna and in order to commemorate the event of Khandava forest dahanam, every year during December-january, in front of the temple, a forest is created and is burnt marking the dahanam of Khandava forest by Lord Krishna.
- 8) Near the temple there is a church . One day, the temple elephant named as Balakrishna who could not tolerate the sound of the church bell, directly went to the church and removed the bell and deposited the same in the temple premises. From that day onwards, there was no bell ringing in the church. It is sad to note that the elephant is no more but we could see a big photograph of the elephant in the temple premises.
- 9) It is very interesting to note that Lord Ayyappa's ornaments are kept here in safe custody and every year during December (around 25<sup>th</sup>) the ornaments are taken to Sabarimala with full temple honours for the Makara Jyothi event.
- 10) There are 4 gopurams and there are 18 steps to reach the garbagirham. These 18 steps indicate the 18 forces, some say they refer to the Shadchakras in our body, some compare it to our 5 sense organs, 5 praanas, 5 karmendriyas , mind, intellect and ego.

The Pampa river is on the northern side of the gopuram. To reach it, we have to climb down 57 steps.

### **THIRUVANVANDOOR :**

STHALAPURANAM:

- 1) Nakula stayed here and renovated the temple
- 2) "THIRUVANVANDOOR" means the place where Perumal (i.e.Thiruvan in Malayalam) resides.
- 3) Narada Rishi who was cursed by Brahma that he could not stay in one place and will keep on roaming as Thrilokasanchari came to this place and did penance. Lord appeared before Narada and blessed him. Narada prayed to Perumal that he wanted to stay in that place and write Naradiya Puranam. God conceded his request and thus Narada contrary to Brahma's curse stayed here and wrote the great Naradiya Puranam which contains 25,000 granthas.
- 4) Perumal fulfilled Markandeya rishi;s desire to see the entire world. Perumal allowed Markandeya rishi to enter into His body and the rishi was able to see the Universe within the body of Perumal.

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- 5) The Perumal is known as Pambanaiappan as the Pampa river encircles the temple. He is also known as Pambanaiappan because He has the great snake, Adishesha as His couch.
- 6) Previously there was an idol of Gopalakrishna which was worshipped for years. When a Champakassery Raja tried to take away the idol from the temple and install it elsewhere where he had constructed a temple, a Namboodri priest drowned himself with the idol. This idol was later discovered in 1963. A local devotee had a dream wherein it revealed that the idol of Gopalakrishna was lying buried in an ancient tank. Accordingly, the local people dug the spot and found the idol.. This idol was consecrated and a separate shrine within the temple premises was constructed. When we went, the idol was adorned with Chandana Kaapu. We took snaps near this shrine and the pujari was very kind enough to enlighten us with this episode and gave us lots of chandanam.

### **THIRUKADITHANAM:**

#### STHALAPURANAM:

- 1) The temple was renovated by Sahadeva
- 2) As once upon a time , this place was a center of learning, it was known as THIRU GADI THAANAM which got corrupted as Thirukodithanam.
- 3) **Importance of Ekadasi Vrutham** : King Rukmangatha worshipped Sage Narada and garlanded the sage with the rarest of flowers from his garden. Indra who saw this felt jealous and sent his men to pluck those flowers. Hence, the flowers would disappear daily. In spite of strict vigilance, the thieves could not be caught as they were invisible to the human eyes. It happened that one day, the watchmen burnt dried twigs of brinjal plant to protect themselves from cold. Due to the smoke that emanated from the twigs, the devas who had come to steal the flowers lost their divine powers and could not go back to heaven. When they were brought in front of the king, the generous king instead of punishing them asked them to take the flowers if that would please Lord Indra. But as the devas had lost their divine powers, they could not fly. They added that they could go back to Indralokam provided some one parts with the Ekadasi vrutha phalam to them. In the whole kingdom, there was only one lady who had fasted on that Ekadasi day. Though she observed the fast unknowingly, she benefited out of it. With this accrued benefit which was transferred to the devas, they left for heaven. King Rukmangatha realized the Ekadasi vrutha mahima and started observing Ekadasi fast and his citizens also followed him. To test the king' s sincerity, Sage Durvasa came for Dwadasi paaranaai and just like Ambarisha Raja, this king was also put to test. The same story is related emphasizing the importance of Ekadasi vrutham. In another instance, the king who was infatuated by the beauty of a lady forgot all his duties and spent time with her. When he realized his mistake, the lady asked him to behead his son . Accordingly, the king beheaded his son and the lady disappeared. God who was pleased with

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the king's bhakti appeared before the king and conferred the boons desired by the king. The prince was brought back to life and at the request of the King, Perumal decided to stay there. This explains for the Perumal's presence in this town.

- 4) It was here that King Pandu and Queen Madiri lost their lives. To commemorate the event of Madiri's sati, every year during November-December a festival called "DEEPAM" is celebrated which is not found in any other temple.
- 5) In front of the temple, a stone pillar can be found on top of which there is an image of a man which is 3 feet high. As already mentioned earlier, the Kerala temples are not opened once they are closed. In one case, as the Raja of Chemakasseri wanted to have darshan, the Marar whose duty is to blow conch before opening the Srikovil blew the conch inspite of strict opposition from the priest. As the priest will be obliged to open the Srikovil if the conch is blown, the Marar acted in this way. But no sound emerged from the conch and the Marar fell dead. This shows that Perumal does not make any distinction between the King/powerful and any other person. This explains why the temples in Kerala are not opened once they are closed. Rules and regulations are same for all.
- 6) According to the books related to Kerala divya desams, the devotees while doing pradakshina sprinke rose water. But when we asked the pujari about this practice, he replied that to his knowledge there was no such practice. When we were reciting Nammalwar's pasurams on this Perumal, the priest immediately told that it was from Naalayira Divya Prabhandham. We were overwhelmed with joy to find such a kind, cordial, Tamil speaking pujari in Kerala. He also told us that the pratishtai of the Golden Dwajasthambam was on 11/6/1. Renovation work was going on in the temple. WE were asked to send donations to the following address:

### THIRUVALLAVAZH STHALAPURANAM:

- 1) The idol was sculpted by Viswakarma at the behest of Lord Krishna and was given to Lord Krishna's friend, Satyaki at the end of Dwapara Yuga. Towards the end of Dwapara Yuga, Lord asked Garuda to keep the idol in safe custody and accordingly Garuda kept it in Netravati river which flows from Karnataka to Kerala. Later, the royal consort of Cherama Perumal had a dream that the idol of Krishna was lying on the bed of Netravati river. All efforts were taken to search the idol. In 59 B.C., the idol was discovered due to the joint effort of the Tulu Brahmins and the local potties. The idol was duly consecrated and a temple was built. As the Tulu Brahmins and the local potties jointly found the idol, the performance of poojas to the diety was shared amongst themselves as a commemoration of the incident. Hence, the tulu Brahmins offer pooja for 15 days and the Patthu Illam potties (potties from 10 houses) perform pooja for 15 days. The idol is very beautiful to look at. Twice in a year, the Lord is dressed

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like a hunter (on Dhanur maasam-Thiruvaadarai day and on Chithirai Maasam-Vishu day). Prior to August 1967, ladies were not allowed to enter into the sanctum sanctorum.

- 2) The dwajasthambam is 50 feet high and it is believed that it extends to an equal extent under the ground. The Nalambalam (the areas around the dwajasthambam ) is made of granite. On the top of the dwajasthambam, there is a panchaloka idol of Garuda about 3 feet in height. The temple is very big and the dwajasthambam is also big. Took photograph of hubby covering the dwajasthambam with Garuda.
- 3) The pushkarini is usually found outside the temple premises in Mali Naadu divya desams. Whereas in this divya desam, it is inside the temple premises and it is quite a big tank.
- 4) Like other Kerala temples , the Srikovil (garbagriham) is round in shape. On the eastern side, (the moment we enter we see the shrine of Lord Vallabha and behind this shrine there is a small shrine for Sudarshana Alwar where Vibhoothi is given commemorating the incident of Perumal's darshan to Gantakarna , the great Shiva devotee. It may be recalled that Gantakarna was a staunch Siva devotee and in order to avoid hearing Vishnu Naamam he hung bells in his ear and used to shake his head vigorously to avoid hearing the sound. But when he asked Shiva to give him moksha, Shiva advised him to pray to Perumal. Hence, Gantakarna prayed to Vishnu and Perumal who was pleased with his devotion, granted him moksha. This incident took place in this place. Hence, to mark Gantakarna's devotion to Shiva, Vibhoothi is given in Sudarshana Alwar sannidhi. This sannidhi is just behind the Perumal's sannidhi in the same wall.
- 5) The garbagriham is built in such a way that if we look at Perumal's Thirumukham, we cannot have darshan of Thiruvadi and if we have darshan of Perumal's Thiruvadi from a distance, we cannot have darshan of Thirumugam
- 6) There is a peculiar system followed in this temple while offering neivedhyam. Food is first offered to a Brahmin in arecanut leaf even before neivedyam is offered to Lord. There is an interesting story connected with this. It is told that there a lady devotee who had no children used to observe Ekadasi vrutham (like Anasuya) and used to break her fast on Dwadasi after feeding a brahmin. Due to fear of a Rakshasa by name Tolakasuran who was harassing pious people, it became very difficult for Sankaramangalamma to find a Brahmin. Once when no Brahmin turned up on Dwadasi day, the dejected lady prayed to Vallabha swamy for help. Lord came in the disguise of a Brahmin to her house and asked her to feed. He said that he would go to have bath and then have His food. A fierce fight took place between the Brahmin and Tolakasuran and finally Lord killed Tolakasuran with his Chakram. Sudarshana chakram had a dip in water to cleanse the blood of the asura and the tank came to be known as Chakra Theertham. The old lady who had heard that the asura was killed was convinced that the Brahmin was

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Perumal Himself and at her request, Perumal revealed His true form and blessed the lady and gave her moksha. Since the lady used to offer food to a Brahmin in arecanut leaf, the system is followed even today.

- 7) There is an idol of Durvasa Rishi in this temple and it is believed that every night he offers prayers to Perumal. The local people say that they can hear the sound of conch and bell which are used doing Thiruvaaradhanai. Every day, Kadali pazham, a type of plantain is offered to Perumal as the same was offered by Durvasa Rishi to Perumal when the idol was first installed.
- 8) During May, festival is conducted for one day when 3 Bhagavathis from nearby temples (Devata of Kavil temple, Padappad temple and Alamthurath temples) pay a visit to this temple . The deities are carried in special palanquins by the potties from northern entrance to the temple. Only on this day, this door is opened . These deities return the next day in the afternoon after receiving Vishu offerings and new clothes from Perumal.

### **THIRUPULIYUR: SHTALAPURANAM:**

- 1) Temple renovated by Bhima
- 2) SAPTHA RISHIS : Once the Saptha rishis were passing by a kingdom which was in drought. Seeing the pitiable condition of the Saptha Rishis who were begging for alms, the King Dristadumnya gifted some land to them but the saptha rishis refused saying that they could not accept anything as the kingdom was itself in drought. But the king once again tried to help the rishis by sending some golden fruits along with fruits through his messengers. But the saptha rishis who knew this due to their jnanadrushti refused to accept the fruits. This infuriated the king and the king performed a yaaga out of which a demoness by name Krithyai appeared . She was assigned the task of killing the saptha rishis. There was a tank full of lotuses and the saptha rishis decided to eat the stalk of the lotus to satisfy their hunger. The demoness settled down near the same tank and when questioned by the saptha rishis, she told them that her name was Yadudaani and she was guarding the tank. The saptha rishis requested her to allow them to eat the lotus stalk. She said that they could do so after revealing their names. The saptha rishis by now could understand who she was through their jnana drishti and they told their names in a jumbled way so that she could not understand the meanings. When she asked them to explain the meanings of their names, a Tridandi Swami who had joined the saptha rishis came forward and told her that he would reveal his name and that in case she could not understand the meaning, he would hit her with Tridanda and kill her. She agreed and accordingly when the Tridandi Swami told his name was Soonasakha, she could not understand the meaning of it. Immediately, the Tridandi Swami hit her with his tridandam and killed her. Afterwards, the saptha rishis entered the tank and plucked the lotus stalk and before partaking the

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meal, went to offer prayers to Perumal. At that time, soonasakha hid the lotus stalk. When the rishis came back, they were shocked to see the lotus stalks missing and started cursing that whoever hid the stalk would suffer in hell etc. But Soonasakha was the only one who blessed the thief. Immediately, the saptha rishis guessed that it was Soonasakha who had done this act. Soonasakha who was none other than Lord Indra revealed his true form. Perumal appeared before the saptha rishis as Mayapiran and praised the single minded devotion of the rishis , especially Kasyapa rishi. At the behest of the saptha rishis, Perumal decided to stay there. This is the story of Mayapiran connected with this place.

- 3) Bhima (who wanted to atone for his sin of shouting "ASHWATHAMA HATAHA KUNJARA") set on a pilgrimage and when he came to this place, he heard the above story from the local people and was convinced that he could get peace of mind if he prayed to Mayapiran and decided to stay there and meditate on the Lord. In due course, Perumal gave darshan to Bheema and as a thanks giving measure, Bhima renovated this temple.
- 4) This temple is situated on a hillock and we have to climb few steps to enter the temple .
- 5) All the offerings in this temple are made in grand scale only befitting the stature of Bhima's personality.
- 6) Due to a conflict between Nambudri Brahmins and a Nair, mass murders took place in the temple premises and the temple was closed for many years. It may be briefly mentioned that in order to get rid of a Nair , the Nambudri Brahmins invited him to the temple, made the Nair sit on a well decorated chair and the moment the Nair sat on the chair, the chair broke and the Nair fell on a deep pit which was dug by the nambudri Brahmins. To avenge the Nair's death , his relatives quarreled with the Nambudri Brahmins as a result of which mass murders took place in the temple. It is believed that the ghosts of the people who died in the conflict roams about and after many years, a Siddha purusha was brought to this place and he performed expiatory sacrifices and a small shrine was built in the temple premises for the departed souls. Only after this , the temple was re-opened.
- 7) Once a chief of Illambal who was suffering from acute stomach pain prayed to Lord of Puliyur that if his ailment was cured, he would offer huge numbers of Appams and Adas and the chieftain was cured . he accordingly made the offerings to satisfy Bhima's hunger.
- 8) Another interesting story connected with this kshetram is people who belong to kuruvas (they hail from Quilon) do not stay here during nights because of fear of Bheema. It may be mentioned here that there is a temple for Duruyodhana in Quilon and the people who belong to this place are called kuruvas.
- 9) The special offering in this temple is payasam which is called CHATHUSHATHAM. Minimum quantity with which it is prepared is 400 measures of rice.

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### **THIRUCHENKUNDROOR:**

#### STHALAPURANAM:

- 1) The two sons of kasyapa rishi namely Suran and Padmam wanted to become immortal and as advised by their father, they prayed to Lord Shiva to become immortal. Lord Shiva who was pleased with their prayers granted the boon that they would henceforth become one and could not be killed in the hands of Brahma, Vishnu, Maheshwara and would be immortal. This Surapadmam after getting the boon became invincible and started torturing the devas and rishis. The devas requested Shiva to find a way out and it is believed that Shiva came to this place and started meditating on the Lord. Perumal appeared before Shiva and told that though Surapadmam could not be killed by the Trinity, he could be defeated by a person other than the Tri murthis. As directed by Lord Vishnu, Shiva asked his son, Murugan to fight with the asura. A fierce fight took place between Lord Muruga and Surapadmam. When Surapadma took the form of a big tree, Lord Vishnu directed Muruga to pierce the tree with this vel and throw them apart. Murugan acted accordingly and Sura and Padma disintegrated. They prayed to Lord Muruga for forgiveness and asked him to grant them a boon that they would always remain with Muruga. Accordingly, Sura became a cock on Lord Muruga's flag and Padma became peacock.
- 2) Yudhishtira prayed to Perumal at this place for getting mental solace and as a thanks giving measure renovated the temple and installed the idol which he worshipped.
- 3) In this temple, Lord Vishnu is seen holding chakram in his left hand and sankhu in his right hand.

### **THIRUVANANTHAPURAM** STHALAPURANAM:

1) There was a great devotee by name Bilva Mangala Swami near Mangalore who used to worship Salagramas and meditate on Lord. Such was his bhakti that Perumal appeared in the form of a small boy and stayed with the Swamiyar on the condition that if the Swamiyar got annoyed with the boy, the boy would immediately leave. Swamiyar accepted to this condition. Whenever the Swamiyar used to meditate, the boy would displace the Salagramams. Once the boy swallowed a salagramam and this annoyed the Swamiyar and he shouted at the boy. Immediately the boy reminded the Swami that he had broken his promise and if he wished to see Him, he could do so at Ananthakadu. The repentant Swami started in search of the boy. He could hear only the sound of anklets and could see the foot prints of the boy. After a long search, when he was walking on the banks of Arabian Sea, he heard a lady

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threatening her child that she would throw him in Ananthankadu. The moment the Swami heard the word Ananthankadu, he was delighted. He proceeded to Ananthankadu based on the directions of the lady from whom he enquired. He once again heard the sound of anklets and waist bell and suddenly a big Ilupa tree fell down and it got transformed into Perumal in Sayanam on ananthan with four arms. The idol was so long that its head was in Thiruvallar and feet in Thirupapur and the middle part in Ananthankadu. Swami prayed to Perumal to be forgiven and prayed to Perumal to contract Himself. Accordingly, Perumal contracted His Thiruvuruvam. Ananthankadu is presently known as THIRUVANANTHAPURAM. The Swami used to offer Rice Kanji and salted mango pieces in a coconut shell to the Perumal and a pulaya woman used to husk the paddy. She was later gifted lands by Maharaja which can be found near the eastern entrance. Even today, the same neivedyam is offered to Lord but the coconut shell is now encased in gold.

2 ) One more legend connected with this kshetram is there was a Tulu Brahmin who was a staunch devotee of Perumal and how the Lord appeared is the same as is mentioned in the previous legend.

- 1) In Ananthanakadu, there lived a pulaya couple and one day, the lady heard the cry of a child. When she saw the child, she was so overcome with happiness that she nursed the child like a mother. After feeding the child with milk, she left it under a shade of a tree and resumed her work. But when she turned back, she was horrified to see a five headed serpent spreading its hood on top of the child protecting the child from weather. This was observed for many days and was duly reported to the king and the king who recognized Perumal and Adisesha in the child and serpent constructed a temple in that place itself.
- 2) The wooden idol was worshipped for many years and this vigraham was replaced by the present one. The present vigraham is made up of 12,000 salagramams and it is bound by paste which is a mixture of molasses and mustard. The salagramams are so indigenously built that it is difficult to identify them separately.
- 3) The gopuram is 100 feet high with 7 storeys and is illuminated every evening.
- 4) The dwajasthambam which is 80 feet high is a fine log of teak and is encased in gold . The log is covered with copper plate rings and are gilded with gold . This is done in a unique way by Kerala Artisans. This dwajasthambam was brought by elephants from a site of 48 kms without touching the ground. For more details , we may refer to Page 133 of Vol VII Divya Desams by Ms.Ramesh.
- 5) One has to climb few steps to reach Ootakal mandapam. This Ootakal mandapam is a thick single granite stone measuring 20' by 20' and 2 and a half thickness which was brought by Perumal Himself. Standing on this Ootakal, one can have a clear vision of Perumal through 3 Dwaarams.

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- 6) Maharajas of Travancore took great interest in developing/ renovating the temple and even today, members from the Royal family come to have darshan of Perumal. These maharajas have surrendered themselves in toto to this Perumal and they are known as PADMANABHA DASAS. We can find a big photograph of Raja Marthandavarma.
- 7) In the Seveli mandapam, there are beautiful sculptures depicting women carrying lamps and on top of the pillar , we can find Unicorns etc. The most interesting feature is that though there are more than 370 women sculptures, no two sculpture is identical.
- 8) The two important poojas performed to the diety are Attazha pooja and Arthajama pooja. Attazha pooja is performed in the evening after Deeparadhana. At that time, Perumal is decorated with sandals, flowers, silk cloth etc. It may be recalled that similar pooja is performed at Guruvayoor also.
- 9) Utsavams are performed twice in a year , in the months of Meenam (March-April) and Thulam (Sep-Oct) for 10 days with Kodiyettam (beginning), Palli Vetta on 9<sup>th</sup> day (when Lord goes on hunting expedition) and Aaratu on 10<sup>th</sup> day at Sankhumukham on the banks of Arabian Sea. The royal family and the temple authorities go in a procession. It may be noted that our Lord Srinivasa also goes on hunting expedition after His Brahmotsavam. In Trivandrum, the Raja acts on behalf of Perumal during hunting whereas in Tirupati, the head priest acts like hunter thus representing Perumal .
- 10) A festival , by name, Bhadra Deepam is performed in the months of Mithuna (July) and Kanya (Jan) and once in 6 years, MURAJAPAM festival is performed for 56 days . At that time, Mura Japam (i.e.all the 4 vedas are recited 7 times) , Mantrajapam, jala japam, Sahasranama Japam are done. This was started by Marthanda varma who wanted to atone for his sin of committing many murders during wars.

### THIRUVANPARISAARAM

#### STHALAPURANAM :

- 1) Saptha rishis were doing penance near this place called Ashrama near Suchindram. First, Lord Shiva appeared and when they expressed their desire to see Lord Vishnu, they were advised by Lord Shiva to go north-west and do penance. Perumal pleased with their devotion appeared before them in this place. At the request of the rishis, Perumal continued to stay here.
- 2) When Lord Vishnu took Narasimha Avataaram, no one could pacify Him. Even Thayar was frightened to see the ferocious form of the Lord. It is well known that only Bhakta Prahalada for whose sake the Lord took the form of Narasimha could pacify Perumal. Thayar therefore came to this place and started meditating on the Lord. Perumal came in search of Thayar and Thayar took her usual place in Perumal's Thirumaarbhu. Hence, Perumal is known as THIRUVAZHMBAN. Thayar is

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enshrined on Perumal's chest. Perumal is seen wearing a golden chain with a locket containing the image of Thayar. It may be recalled that even our Lord Srinivasa at Tirumala is adorned with Lakshmi Haaram and this Haaram is not removed even during Thirumanjanam. We were blessed to have darshan of Thirumanjana Seva at Tirumala. May God bless us with another opportunity to watch VASTRAALANKARANA SEVA AT TIRUMALA.

- 3) In the garbagriham, on the right side of the Moolavar, we can see idols of Rama, Sita, Lakshmana. When Vibishana was returning to Lanka after Sri Rama Pattabhishekam, he felt an urge to see Lord Rama in pattabhisheka form. God conceded Vibhishana's request and hence we can find idols of Lord Sri Rama in this temple. I would like to brief about some temples connected with Vibhishana and the reasons thereof :

TEMPLE AND ITS LOCATION	PURPOSE
Lord Ranganatha Swamy-Srirangam	Idol which was gifted by Lord Rama was placed here by Vibishana and Vibhishana could not lift the idol as Perumal decided to stay here
Lord Sowriraja Perumal-Thirukannapuram	On every Amavasya day, in the noon, Perumal shows His nadai azhagu to Vibhishana
Lord Rama at Thirukurulappan's sannidhi-Thirupathisaaram	Vibhishana's wish of seeing Perumal in Pattabhisheka Kolam was granted
Lord Adi Jagannatha Perumal-Thirupullani	Saranagathi Kshetram- Vibhishana sought refuge at the feet of Rama in this place

- 4) Nammalwar was born in this place. It may be briefly recalled that Nammalwar's parents, Kari and Udhaya Nangi prayed to Thirukurungudi Perumal to bless them with progeny and Perumal told them that He Himself would appear as their son. Thus, with the blessings of Perumal, Udhaya Nangi conceived and came to her parents' place at Thirupathisaaram for delivery. Hence, Nammalwar was born here. Later, this child was taken to Adinatha Perumal kovil at Tirunelveli (the present Alwar Tirunagari), where the child who was left in front of Perumal crawled and sat under a hollow of a tamarind tree. The story how the child sat for 16 years in deep meditation and composed Thiruvaimozhi is too well known to bear repetition. Chithirai Thirunal Maharaja made an idol of Nammalwar in this place .
- 5) The dwaja sthambam was constructed by Kulasekhara Alwar as a token of gratitude. Once when Kulasekhara Alwar (who was a king) was returning after victory in a battle, he had lost his horse and he found the same in this place. Hence, this place came to be known as THIRU PARI SAARAM .Pari means horse. Hence, Kulasekhara Alwar prayed to this

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Perumal and renovated the temple and built the dwajastambam which is copper plated.

- 6) As the Perumal of this divya desam helped Raja Marthanda Varma in defeating his enemies, the king took initiative in celebrating a festival known as ANUSHAM THIRUNAAL.(Anusham is the birth star of the king)
- 7) Yudhishtira on his way to Rameswaram stayed here . The day he visited this temple is celebrated as Karthigai Bali Utsavam as the star on the day Yudhishtira visited was Karthigai.
- 8) On Chithirai Thiru Naal (utsavam), Perumal is seated on a Ratha. This ratha was gifted as a thanks- giving by Moolam Thirunaal Raja who was blessed with a son.

The most important festival is ADI SWATHI, the day on which Perumal took Kulasekhara Alwar bodily to Paramapadam

### THIRUVATAARU:

#### STHALAPURANAM:

- 1) Brahma performed yagna without his consort, Goddess Saraswathi and as a result of Saraswathi's fury, 2 asuras by name Kesan and Kesi emerged out of the sacrificial fire . As they emerged out of the yagna, they became immortal and as result of this , they made life miserable to one and all. The devas headed by Brahma approached Vishnu for help and accordingly, Perumal in the form of Kesava fought with Kesan. Perumal threw Kesan who fell on top of Mahendragiri and Perumal blew His conch. Instantaneously, Adisesha wound himself around Kesan thus disabling the asura to move and immediately Perumal laid on Adisesha thus putting His weight. When the asura tried to get out of Adisesha's coils, Perumal made 11 Sivalingas to stand as guard around the asura and Perumal. Even today, the worship to Lord Shiva on Sivarathiri day is said to be complete only when the devotee after visiting the 11 Shiva shrines ends his trip in the Perumal kovil.
- 2) Kesi who saw her brother defeated wanted to avenge and hence she along with her friend ,Kodai took the form of rivers and encircled the temple with the intention of submerging the temple. At that time, it is believed that Bhoomi devi raised the temple . Hence, the temple is situated at a height of 55 feet from the ground level. The rivers joined with Arabian Sea at a place known as Moovaatru mukham. The rivers were cursed by Perumal and they repented for their action. Perumal forgave them and had a dip in Moovaatru mukham. Even today, during Panguni utsavam, Perumal comes on golden Garuda and has dip in the river thus enacting the saapa vimochana incident.
- 3) Adi Kesava Perumal helped many kings like Raja Kerala Varma , Raja Marthanda Varma etc. in winning the battle. When Raja Kerala Varma who was fighting against Moghals, prayed to Perumal in 16 verses known as PADA SANKIRTANA OR ADIKESAVA STHAVAM, from nowhere wasps came from the temple, started stinging the Moghal army and the

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Moghal chief who was stung by the wasp fell down and died along with his horse. The frightened Moghal soldiers ran away from the place and Raja Kerala Varma captured 300 horses and formed own cavalry.

- 4) Once when Raja Marthanda Varma who was trying to escape from his enemies was roaming in disguise and when he was hungry, a poor Brahmin widow fed him with rice, salt and mango. As a token of gratitude, when the king regained his kingdom, he instituted an offering of rice, salt and mango to Adikesava Perumal and ordered that henceforth the lady and her descendants would have the neivedyam first.
- 5) A nawab plundered this temple and took away the idol along with him and kept the idol along with rubbish in a lumber room. Every day, the idol would come on top and in spite of being tied down with ropes, the idol would come to the top. At that time, the nawab's wife developed serious illness which could not be cured by anyone. Perumal appeared in the dream of the temple priest and ordered him to go to Nawab's palace and inform the Nawab that if the idol was returned, his wife would be cured of illness. The Nawab acted accordingly and his wife was cured. The Nawab gifted a silver plate and a cap to Perumal and this is used at the time of SEVELI everyday. The Nawab also made an endowment for THIRUALLA POOJA , wherein Perumal is offered AVUL, ARISI AND PORI as neivedyam. This is a typical Muslim dish . When the priest who was bringing back the idol halted in a place for completing his evening rituals, the idol got stuck to the ground. Later under the supervision of the King, suddhi kalasam was performed and this is carried out every year during the last day of the utsavam in the month of Tulam. The idol is taken from Thiruvattaru to River Parali on the golden Garuda.
- 6) The Garuda vigraham is made of pure gold , two maragatha stones adorn the eyes and manikya is placed on Garuda's chest. This idol of Garuda is kept in the garbagriham beside Utsava murthis. When we enquired about this, the priest replied in a negative way.
- 7) A special festival is celebrated called PUSHPANJALI when Perumal is decorated with flowers like our POOLANGI SEVA in Tirumala.
- 8) Like in Thiruvananthapuram, here also we can find many Deepalakshmis who differ from each other. The sculptures in these two places are marvellous.