CHAPTER III

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The system of worship in the Siva temples is governed by *Agamas*. *Agamas* originated with Tamil culture from ninth century A.D.\(^1\) The *Agamas* prescribed idol worship in all its details. It has developed an elaborate ritual in the matter of daily worship as well as annual festivals in the temples.\(^2\) The daily rituals related to worship are called *Nithya Puja*.\(^3\) The ceremonies in connection with some special festivals are named as *Naimittika*.\(^4\) The day-to-day *pujas* are very essential to preserve the holiness of the sacred shrine. Various inscriptions are found about endowments given by the kings and the individuals for the conduct of daily offerings and number of festivals connected therein.

The word *puja* is derived from 'pucey' which means the flower ritual to God. The *pujas* are classified into the *athmartha pujas* and *paramartha pujas*.\(^5\) Generally, the *pujas* are performed twelve times a day. The *nithya pujas* are performed in morning, evening and night. In Siva temples, *nithya pujas* are conducted seven times a day. The names and timings of the seven *pujas* are detailed as under:

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4. Ibid. p.66.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial.No</th>
<th>Daily Pujas</th>
<th>Timings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Thiruvananthal</td>
<td>6 A.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Uthaya Marthandam</td>
<td>6.45 A.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sirukalasandhi</td>
<td>7.30 A.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kalasandhi</td>
<td>8.30 A.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Uchchi Kalam</td>
<td>10.30 A.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sayaratchai</td>
<td>6.30 P.M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ardhasamam</td>
<td>8.30 P.M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Daily these seven times of *pujas* are performed in most of the Siva temples. The first five *pujas* are performed in the forenoon, Sayaratchai *puja* in the evening and Ardhasama *puja* at night.

In some Siva temples, only six time pujas are being conducted. First in the early hours of the morning, the second at twelve in the noon; the next in the evening at six, the fourth at eight in the night and the last at nine in the night. Among these, the most important is the early morning service.\(^6\)

Daily these *pujas* are being conducted with *thuba deepa*, offering of flowers and *neivaidhya* made up of rice are offered to the deities. *Nithya pujas* are performed with *natheswaram*, *tavil* and bells. Recitation of sacred hymns to the deities changes according to the festivals celebrated in the temples.

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\(^6\) In the Siva Temples, this ceremony is called *Thiruppalliyeluchi*, and *Viswarupasevi* in Vaishnava temples (vide T.A.S. Vol.III, Part-I), p.167.
THIRUVANANTHAL

At Murappanadu, five out of nine, the thiruvananthal is regularly performed with pomp and show. The doors of the temple are opened in the early morning. Then cleaning of the temple takes place. This will be followed by thiruvananthal, the invoking of the almighty from 6.00 a.m. to 6.45 a.m. At Amman shrine after thuba deepa the doors of Palliyarai are opened, Sivachariya shakes the unjal lord and goddess, then thuba deepa and arathanas are performed. Immediately after that the othuvar sings Thirupallieluchi, then thuba deepa is conducted.

UDHAYA MARTHANDAM

In almost all the Siva temples, Udhaya Marthandam is performed around 6.45 a.m. During this puja, the priest opens the door of the Arthamandapa and sets aside the screen. The priest lights the lamp. Then he removes the garland of the deity and adorns it with new fresh garlands. This is followed by Amuthu Seidal, curd, rice, milk, pori and thambulam are offered to the Mulavar. The priest chants mantrams and conducts karpura arathana.
SIRU KALASANDHI

Thirumanjanam or holy bath an important ceremony in the Siva temples, forms an essential daily item of worship. Thirumanjanam is performed to the Mulavar from 7.30 to 8.30 a.m. Thirumanjanam is conducted with the closed hanging screen. Twelve kinds of perfumed fluids are mixed together and are used for thirumanjanam to the deity. On the festival days after this neivaidhyam, deepa arathana is conducted.

KALASANDHI

Kalasandhi is being conducted between 8.30 to 9.30 a.m. The priest goes to the nearby river to take holy water with musical troops. After this, the priest conducts Namakumba puja, veda motal homam. Then the abisheka of the god and minor deity are taken place with abisekha materials like river water, gingelly oil, milk, sugar, honey, turmeric powder, tender coconut, water sandal and finally with pure water. After that god is decorated with fresh flowers, garland and other ornaments. The temple priest would recite some hymns from the Devaram. The neivaidhya offered in this puja is plain cooked rice.
UCHCHI KALAM

At Srivaikuntam, the sixth one out of nine temples, this puja is held between 10.30 to 11.00 a.m. Thirumanjanam is conducted to the Mulavar. Neivaidhya is annam, porial, kulambu, kootu, ghee and dhal.

SAYA RATCHAI

At Srivaikuntam, the Sayaratchai is regularly held at 6.30 p.m. At that time, abisekha and decorations are made to the main deities of the temple. The neivaidhya is sambha rice.

ARDHASAMAM

In Siva temples, this ardhasama puja is being conducted between 8.30 and 9 p.m. Special puja is conducted to lord Siva and Chandikeswarar. Then the lord is kept in the thanga unjal. Amman statue is also kept on the unjal. Milk, fruits, appam, vadai and pongal are the neivaidhya and distributed to the devotees. The doors of Palliyarai are closed. After this, the temple remains closed.

A puja is the worship of deity along with certain formalities and offerings. Out of the nine Siva temples except at Rajapathi, havis or cooked rice is the principal item offered as oblation. Different varieties of
fruits, sweets and pudding are also offered at times. The oblations are followed by the fumigate of incense and illuminated lamps.

The main item in the daily pujas is the ablution and oblation or prasadam to the deities on the different occasions. After offerings they are distributed to the temple employees and the devotees. Amudu and prasadam are the terms used in the inscriptions for the holy food. The food is offered to God thrice in a day, the morning, mid-day and the early hours of the night.

In all the Sivalayams, a picturesque ceremony called Thirumanjanam or abishekham is conducted. The offerings of sandal, holy water, flowers and incense are very common in the Sivalayams with their appropriate mantra.

Apart from these regular pujas, purificatory ceremonies are also conducted in the Sivalayams. On certain special occasions, such ceremonies are conducted.

(i) When the idol drops down or shakes
(ii) If it is carried away by a thief
(iii) Damages to the pedestal or the srikoil by fire or force.
(iv) If mushrooms, anthills, worms or insects appear in these parts.

During the annual festive occasions, the idols of various deities are
taken out in procession. At this time, the temples create religious fervour
among the large crowds of people from far and near. Some of the general
features of the festivals in the nine Sivalayams are under:

At Papanasam, during the tamil month of Chitrai, (April-May) the
flag hoisting ceremony is being conducted every year. The ninth day car
festival is conducted in a grand manner. The following day of car festival,
which is the floating festival, is also celebrated with pomp and show.

Among the festivals, Chitrai Visu is the first festival of the year. It
is celebrated on the first day in the month of Chitrai.\textsuperscript{10} This day is
considered to be very auspicious because it marks the beginning of not
only the tamil new year but also the advent of the most beautiful Vasanta.
It may also represent the day on which a yaga began. Moreover, the
ancients say that Brahma, the creator started his creations only on this
particular day.\textsuperscript{11}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{10} Pillai K.K , The Sucindram Temple, Madras, 1953, p.234.
\end{footnotesize}
It is a common belief that the fortunes of the coming year depend on the first object they see on the Vishu day. Therefore, the most important ceremony connected with Vishu is to see kanikanal which literally means the first sight\textsuperscript{12} on the previous day of vishu, different kinds of fruits arranged in a circular bell metal vessel called uruli. The fruits which are arranged in a convenient room are seen by all the members of the family immediately after they are woken up from their bed. It is interesting to observe that on this day, a gift of money was given by the elder members of the family to the children and the poor people.\textsuperscript{13}

At Cheranmahadevi Ammainatharsamy temple familiarly known as Ammanancoil, during the Tamil month of Iyppasi, celestial marriage is regularly conducted every year. In the Tamil month of Markazhi, Thiruvathirai vizha is celebrated, because Thiruvathirai is believed as the Natal star of lord Siva. During the Tamil month of Markazhi, a special festival popularly known as Vyasa Theertham or Mahavithipagam is regularly held. It is to be believed that at the time of this festival, all the rivers joined together with Thamirabarani. In the 27th regnal year of Raja Raja I (1012 AD) Aganaligai Siva Brahmans of Ammainathar temple of Cheranmahadevi, received 20 old Kasu for maintaining the lamp.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 67-68.
\textsuperscript{13} Lakshmi Narayanan, R., Kerala Vilakkal, Madras ,1974, p.16.
\textsuperscript{14} A.R.I.E., 1916-1917, No. 629.
In the 17th regnal year of Sundara Chola Pandya (1038 AD), by the royal order of the king, two velis of land in the village of kallur in Mel Vemba Nadu in Mudikonda Chola Valanadu are offered to the Kailasanathar temple at Cheranmahadevi. In the same year Mannan Suri of Thirunallur in Thiru Kalu Mela Nadu of Cholamandalam granted 15 rams to the Ammainathar temple for a perpetual lamp and twilight lamp.

In the middle of 11th century, Vikrama Chola Pandya Deva’s wife, Ulagudiyar, Queen of the Chola king donated 50 cows to the Ammainatharsamy temple for burning two perpetual lamps. In the third regnal year of Jatavarman alias Udaiyar Chola Pandya Deva, at the request of his father, he granted four veli lands situated at Kallur in Mel Vembu Nadu to the Ammainathar temple.

At Kodaganallur, one time puja is regularly held. Besides special offerings are made on Sivaratri, the only holy night of lord Siva and Thiruvathirai, the Natal star of lord Siva. At Kunnathoor, the fourth one among the Navakailasam, only two times Puja is regularly held now-a-days. Besides, festivals like Sivaratri and Thiruvathirai are celebrated with great devotion.

15. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 619.
17. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 623.
18. Ibid., 1916-1917, No. 642.
In Murappanadu, the fifth in the series, the following days are treated as festive days, viz; Adi Ammavasai, Thai Ammavasai, last friday of every month and saturdays of tamil months. The new moon days known as Adi Ammavasai and Thai Ammavasai are sacred days to the Hindus. The first one falls during the southern progress of the sun or Dakshinayana. The later one falls during the northern progress of the sun called uthirayana.

Seven times pujas are being conducted regularly at Sri Kailasanathar temple at Srivaikuntam. In the after noon puja familiarly known as uchikala puja, Rice, Kootu, and Kulambu are offered to the God. Besides, Thiruvathirai, pradosham, celestial Marriage, Navaratri, Sasti, Karthikai festival, Markazhi Bajan, Varusabisekham, Thaipoosam and Pramorchavam are celebrated regularly.

In 1835 AD, at the request of the natives of Srivaikuntam, Travancore Maharaja Sri Swathi Thirunal donated an elephant to Sri Kailasanathar temple of Srivaikuntam for performing the holy dip of the idol in Thamirabarani river and for other festival purposes.\(^{19}\)

In 1851, at the request of temple authorities of Kodaganallur, Travancore Maharaja Sri Uthiram Thirunal Marthanda Varma granted

\(^{19}\) Kerala Govt. order, 31-10-1010, M.E.
Rs.200/- to the Kailasanathar temple of Kodaganallur for the renovation of the temple.  

At Thenthirupperai, beyond daily Pujas, Sivaratri, Iyppasi festival, Thiruvathirai, and pradosham are regularly held. Certain Kattalai pujas are also conducted by the donors. In the 39th regnal year of Kulotunga Chola I (1109 A.D), he granted two veli lands to the Kailasanathar temple in Thenthirupperai. At Rajapathi, there is no temple at present, but only a stone is found in the ruins. In the serial, the people consider it as eighth one and lit camphor and worship the lord. At Chernthapoomangalam only one time puja is being held regularly. Besides, Sivaratri is being celebrated every year.

SIVARATRI

Navaratri is the nine holy nights dedicated to Goddess Sakthi, where as Sivaratri is the only one auspicious night devoted to lord Siva. It is of different kinds. They are Nithya Sivaratri, Paksha Sivaratri, Yoga Sivaratri and Maha Sivaratri. Maha Sivaratri or the great night of Siva is celebrated by the Hindus on the night of 14th date of the dark half in the Tamil month of Masi.

20. Kerala Govt. order, 10-04-1026, M.E.
Mahasivaratri is called to distinguish it from the ordinary Sivaratri, that falls on the thirteenth day of the dark half of every month is a festival of all India importance.\textsuperscript{24} The important reason to commemorate the day is, on that particular day lord Siva consumed the deadly poison namely Kalakutavisham to save the world from destruction.\textsuperscript{25} The Sivaratri festival is celebrated in all the nine Siva temples by offering of special pujas and abhisekams and the people worship lord Siva throughout the night. All the devotees observe Sivaratri Viratham, because it has more significance than the Siva virathams such as Somavara Viratham, Thiruvathirai Viratham, Ketharaviratham, Kalyani Viratham, Sundara Viratham, Uma Maheswara Viratham, Chula Viratham, Pishaba Viratham and Pradosha Viratham.

Dharapuja

A special ceremony called Dharapuja is conducted in all the Siva temples.\textsuperscript{26} Lord Siva, the cosmic dancer of the universe is the lover of ablution, whereas lord Vishnu is the lover of decoration. Dhara or Thara puja is a peculiar temple festival of lord Siva. It still exists in western temples.

\textsuperscript{26} Pillai K.K., \textit{The Sucindram Temple}, p.209.
The *Dharapuja* is being conducted almost in all *Siva* temples of interior Kerala. The nature and performance of the *puja* is a peculiar one. A big round copper vessel familiarly known as *Dhara Kidaram* is having a small hole under its bottom. Through the hole *Dharba* leaves are inserted. Inside the vessel, water or ghee or milk is poured and it slowly, falls into the head of *Linga* drop by drop, just like drip irrigation. If the *puja* is performed by water, the ceremony is known as *Jala Dhara*, and if it is in Ghee, it is identified as *Grutha Dhara*, and if it is in milk, it is named as *Sheera Dhara*. In Sanskrit, one of the flourishing classical languages, *Jalam* means water, *Grutham*-Ghee, *Sheeram*-milk.

At Murappanadu, fifth out of the nine, the devotees of lord *Siva*, recently, conducted *Dharapuja* for one *Mandalam*, i.e. 41 days. After completion, there was heavy down pour in that locality. Lord Siva is a lover of *abhisekam* or ablution. Hence, this kind of *Dharapuja* can alone please lord *Siva*, the almighty of the universe and the head of *Saiva* cult. Being the lover of ablution, lord *Siva* will be much pleased if *Dhara puja* is conducted regularly.

Almost in all the Eight *Sivalayams* except *Rajapathi*, *pradosham* is regularly celebrated with gay and gaiety. The *pradosha* worship is to be performed in the evening.

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27. Interview with Rajamani, Temple priest, Murappanadu, dt. 08 April 2007.
The 13th day of each lunar fortnight, either bright or dark, is the day for the worship of lord Siva. This worship brings ultimate victory and great success in all undertakings and the fulfilment of one’s cherished desires. It is believed that lord Siva, the cosmic dancer of the world is dancing in between the horns of Nandi, the holy vehicle of lord Siva. During the time of Pradosha Velai (4.30pm to 6 pm), more importance is given to Nandi in this ceremony, because Nandi is considered as the direct representative of God.

In order to obtain Ambrosia, Devas and Asuras churned the milky ocean, mount Mantara and Vasuki one of the Attanagas (eight holy snakes), changed as churning stick and cord (churning rope) respectively and helped to churn the ocean. At that time the snake vomited. Devas were afraid of it and took asylum of lord Siva. Lord Siva consumed the poison and saved the Devas from the potential danger. It occurred on Ekadasi day. On Dwadasi, Ambrosia was taken from the milky ocean. On Thriodhasi, the Devas had gone to Kailash to offer vote of thanks. At that time lord Siva danced in between the horns of Nandi. It occurred on Thriodhasi evening (4.30pm to 6 pm). This holy time is known as pradosham.
Pradosham is classified into three. They are Nithya pradosham, Matha pradosham and Maha pradosham. Again Maha pradosham is subdivided into three, uthama Maha pradosham, Mathima Maha Pradosham and Athama Maha Pradosham. The Pradosham which falls on Saturday Thriodhasi during the tamil months of Chithrai, Vaikasi, Iyppasi and Karthikai are known as Uthama Maha Pradosham. The Pradosham which falls on Saturday during the tamil months of Ani, Adi, Avani, Purattasi, Markazhi, Thai, Masi and Pankuni are known as Athama Maha Pradosham.

A very important point to be remembered in this aspect, that during this holy occasion, all the hosts of celestial beings and Gods came down from the heaven and attend the worship in their implied form. Hence, every one should attend at the time of pradosham, because no God is present in their abode to safeguard the victim. Even a single bale leaf (leaf taken from the wood apple tree), offered to the lord at this auspicious time equals hundred Mahapujas. The pradoshams that fall on a saturday have some more importance. It is popularly called as Sani Pradosham. If a devotee enters the premises of Siva temple on the Sani Pradosham day, it is equal to the worship of lord Siva on thousand occasions.

29. Ibid.
It becomes clear from the said account that festivals are a part and parcel of the Hindus' life. They have more societal influences. In Hindu religion, these festivals are celebrated with great impetus. They are prescribed for individual purity and high involvement with the God, the Almighty.

OFFERINGS OF THIRUVAVADUTHURAI ATHEENAM

The branch mutt of Thiruvavaduthurai atheenam is familiarly known as Esanamadam which still exists in the following places namely Papanasam, Thenthirupperai, Murappanadu, and Srivaikuntam. At Papanasam, the Esanamadam of Thiruvavaduthurai mutt is in the south street. The rites and ceremonies are conducted in the name of Papanasam pitchai kattalai, at Papanasam Kailasanathar temple. The under noted pujas and festivals are being conducted on behalf of the said Kattalai:

1. Daily uchikala ablution and pujas.

2. Sabapathi ablution on the natal star of Chathurthi during the Tamil month of Avani.

3. The first day pujas and ablution during the course of nine days Navaratri festival.
4. During the tamil month of Typpasi, 1st day of Sashti vizha ablution and Neivedhyam.

5. 1st Monday (Somavaram) in the tamil month of Karthikai.

6. Thiruppalliyezhuchi, during the tamil month of Markazhi.

7. Seventh day Mandakappadi during the tamil month of Markazhi annual festival.

8. First Yama Puja during the month of Masi on Sivaratri, the only holy night of lord Siva.

9. Seventh day Mandakappadi during the tamil month of Chitrai annual festival.

10. Annual festival (Varusabishekam)

11. Other pujas (Miscellaneous pujas)

At present the venerable Thiruvavaduthurai Ateenam, agreed to renovate the vimanas of Swami, Ambal and Nataraja and offered 110 kilograms of Ashtapantha marunthu. Renovations of temple tower and pilastering marunthu have already been completed.31

31. Letter received from the Thiruvavaduthurai Ateenam, dt. 11 August 2005 (Appendix A).
At Thenthirupperai, the *Esanamadam* is situated in the *sivancoil* street. No *Kattalai* is dedicated to lord Siva on behalf of the *Atheenam*. However, the *Atheenam* agreed to renovate the *Nataraja* icon very soon.\(^{32}\)

At Murappanadu, in the north street in the vicinity of Sri *Kailasanathar* temple, the *Esanamadam* still exists. The following *pujas* are being conducted by the *Atheenam*:

1. Annual festival (*Varusabishekam*)
2. *Kantha sasti Mandakappadi*, and,
3. *Mandakappadi* relating to celestial marriage.

Among the renovation work in the part of the *Atheenam*, the *vimanas* of *Swami* and *Ambal* are renovated. *Esanamadam* and granary are well maintained.\(^{33}\)

In Srivaikuntam at east *kottai vasal* street, the *Esanamadam* still exists. *Sиру Kalasanthi* has been established on behalf of the *Atheenam* and the offerings offered by the revered *Atheenam are* Paddy for daily *Thiruvamuthu* and petty expenses for other festive occasions.\(^{34}\)

\(^{32}\) Ibid.
\(^{33}\) Sri Swami Sivananda, *op.cit.*, p.130.
\(^{34}\) Ibid.