PUJAS AND FESTIVALS

7.1. PUJAS

India, particularly South India has been the sacred land of spirituality from hoary past with its unique credit of the regular monthly as well as annual performance of the maximum number of socio-religious fairs and festivals besides the daily pujas. The popular and ceremonial Hinduism is a panorama of grand fasts, feasts, festivals and pilgrimages¹, as in the case of other faiths of the world such as Christianity and Islam.

The religious festivals have been playing a vital role in the daily Indian especially South Indian life by providing abundant opportunities by paving the path towards spiritual salvation besides a mundane pleasure and the required inspiration to the entire humanity². They also fostered fine arts.

The Hindu pujas and festivals of primary importance were observed with the two fold definite physical and spiritual aims³ as allegorically portayed in the legends of almost all the temples, including the temple of our concern as the stepping stones for the attainment of the final desired goal of the humanity viz., Mukti (Liberation from birth and death). They possess the potentiality to give bodily comfort and relief (health and strength) which are the first contributing factors for the spiritual progress. Both the Pujas and festivals observed in temples of Tamil Nadu in a grand scale to invoke the divine presence for popular welfare and to promote (Bhakti) devotion among the people. The daily (traditional) pujas were intended for general welfare of
the rulers and ruled. The Tamil Agamam (Tirumandiram) emphasizes their importance indirectly by narrating the repercussions of the failure of their performance\textsuperscript{4}.

The details of pujas in Siva temples (rulers and methods of worship) are detailed in many chapters of Saiva Agamas like Karanagamam and kamikagamam. The creation of the earth is the unfolding of the Creative descending from the higher plane of existence into the lower. Those of us who cleave unto God for support that see and comprehend Him in reality as in the void before creation that free ourselves of these earthbound forms. This is certainly the purpose of worship and prayer. This is also the reason why people like together to proclaim His greatness and to supplicate themselves before the Creator of All. Prayer is very special. No worship can thrive within the narrowness of self. Prayer is itself a service.

The word puja is derived from the Sanskrit root word 'puj\textsuperscript{5}' which means offering the flowers. It has been said that the word 'puja' itself is often attempted to be traced to the Dravidian word 'pucey' 'pu' means 'flower' and 'cey' means 'to do or offer'\textsuperscript{6}. The term 'puja' also signifies the purification, perfection and illumination resultant there from. The meaning attached to the various acts connected with the pujas, are all expressive of his term. The Saivagamas deal with many kriyas, directly and indirectly. In the kriya pada of the Agamas, we have the details about the methods of worship of Siva. Sivapuja is the most appropriate sadhana for a harmonious
exercise of thought, word and deed in the path of God. These are the three factors in the human personality which lead the individual to the communion with the Supreme Being.

7.2. CLASSIFICATION OF PUJAS

According to the Saiva Agamas, in the categories of puja, there are three classifications of pujas. They are

i) Atmartha puja or mental worship

ii) Parartha puja or ritualistic worship

iii) Kamiya puja or worship for the fulfillment of a desire

7.2.1. ATMARTHA PUJA

It is also called as manasa puja or mental worship. It is something personal. This worship is unknown to others and does not affect others. Outward adjuncts are not at all necessary for this worship. This puja indicates the extreme devotion. Here the devotee converts his heart as the temple for Him. The light of true wisdom gives infinite joy to the devotee and the worshipper can offer his true and pure love as naivedya to God. This kind of worship is not at all learned by practice. Siva's grace enters into the heart and prepares the ground for such worship. Saint poosalar is the best example of this worship.

Mental worship is divided into three parts; i) The way of karma ii) The way of yoga iii) The way of jnana. Karma way is for all. It may be followed by any ordinary individuals. This way emphasizes the external and internal
services to God. The result of the karma way is to drink the divine spiritual nectar and enjoy the supreme bliss. Yoga way is not for all. It is only for the advanced souls and for the yogis jnana way is for the mental purification.

7.2.2. PARARTHA PUJA

The kriyapada of the Saivagamas deal with outward ritualistic form of worship in the temples. Here, the worshipper is not conditioned by the attachment to a family life. The result of this ritualistic worship is not his own upliftment but for the society around him.

Again this ceremonial puja is of two kinds: i) Svartha puja and ii) parartha puja Svartha is the worship of Siva in the form of Siva linga by the individuals in their homes. The worship of Sivalinga in a public place or in a temple where all classes of people gathered.

7.2.3. KAMIYA PUJA

Among these three classifications, kamiya puja is performed for achieving particular objects. It is like a thanks giving ceremony or fulfilling a vow. Normally a Saiva is not permitted to perform this puja because according to the Saiva religion, puja is always for moksha and not for bhoga or materials pleasure.
7.3. ANOTHER CLASSIFICATION OF PUJAS NITYA AND NAMITYA

The performance of Nitya Pujas during Ushakkalm, Kala Sandhi, Uccikkalam, Sayaratchi, Erandamkalam and Ardhajamam are performed in the Arunachaleswarar temple according to the Saiva Agamas.

In Arunachaleswarar Temple, daily pujas are performed six times a day from Morning to Evening\(^7\). This puja includes Abishekam, Alankaram and Deeparadhana. The timings are stated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pujas</th>
<th>Timings</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ko Puja</td>
<td>5.00 AM</td>
<td>Puja to Cow and opening the temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usha Kalam</td>
<td>5.30 AM</td>
<td>Abishekam, Alankaram and Deeparadhana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kala Sandhi</td>
<td>8.00 AM</td>
<td>Abishekam, Alankaram and Deeparadhana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uchi Kalam</td>
<td>11.00 AM</td>
<td>Abishekam, Alankaram and Deeparadhana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saya Ratshai</td>
<td>6.00 PM</td>
<td>Abishekam, Alankaram and Deeparadhana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irandam Kalam</td>
<td>7.30 PM</td>
<td>Abishekam, Alankaram and Deeparadhana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artha Jamam</td>
<td>9.00 PM</td>
<td>Abishekam, Alankaram and Deeparadhana. Closing the Temple(^8).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3.1. USHAKKALA PUJA

The Ushakkala puja begins at 5 a.m. With palliyarai puja to the bronze image of presiding deity which has been carried in a small beautifully designed palanquin at the end of the Arthajama puja of the previous day's night and kept in the palliyarai of the Amman shrine with palliyarai Nayagi (bronze) throughout the night. After desparadana with the Neivedyam of either milk or Kalkandu, the image of the God is being taken back to the main temple and kept in the alangaramandapa. Subsequently Go-puja⁹ is being performed daily with kappi-rice as Neivedyam to a cow owned by the Devasthanam, after bathing and adorning it with saffron and yellow turmeric powder, by the side of the Nandi. After the completion of the Go-puja with deeparadhana the said Neivedyam is given to that cow.

Following the Go-puja, the sacred bronze image of the God, kept in the alangara-mandapam is carried again to the Mulasthanam. Then, after punyahavajanam (purification ritual) over the dais near the bronze of Nandi in the mahamandapa and pujas to Dvarapalakas (Dindi and Mundi) and praccannapadam, ablution and deeparadhana with Suttannam (plainly cooked rice) instead of the traditional venpongal as food offerings, are held to the presiding deity (which is in the form of Sivalingam as usual in almost all Siva temple of south India). Subsequently abisheg aradhanas are being conducted with the same food offering to Dvara Gananapathi which is on the right side of the entrance to the Garbhagriha, in the front mandapa. The
ushakkala puja ends at 6 a.m. with the mere pujaradhanas (without oblution) to Gajasamhara-murti, Subramanyar with Valli and Deivayanai and the Amman, Ilankilainayaki.

7.3.2. KALASANDHI PUJA

It is conducted between 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. It is only during kalasandhi both abishegam and aradhanas are being performed to all the deities in this temple. During this kalam plainly cooked rice is offered. The kalasandhi puja ends with the Deepardhana to Nandi).

7.3.3. UCCIKKALA PUJA

During this puja ablution is held only to the presiding deity, Kritivasar, Balangurambal and Palipeedam. The Uccikkala puja (12 noon to 12.30 p.m) concludes with deeparadhanam to them in addition to the Gajasamharamurti. The suttannam instead of the traditional curd rice is being offered to the deities. The age-long custom of providing two pattais of neivedyam to wayfarers either at the end of Uccikkalam or of the Ardhajama puja has become out of practice for the past ten years. The temple is kept closed immediately after Uccikkala puja until 4 p.m.

7.3.4. SAYARATCHAI PUJA

During the sayankala puja (5 to 6 p.m) oblution is being performed only to the presiding deities instead of pongal, as food offering, is performed to the pradana Vinayaka and then to Dvara Ganapathi, Ambal, Gajasamharamurti and Kritivasar in such an order. The Sayaratchai puja
comes to a close with the mere deeparadhana puja to Sahasralingam, ensheined in a small independent sub-shrine in the second prakara of this temple.

7.3.5. ERANDAMKALAM PUJA

The Erandamkala puja beings at 7.p.m. with the puja to Bikshatana. Abishegam is not held to any of the deities of this temple excepting on the days of pradosham, during this kalam. Deeparadhana is alone offered to all the Gods and Goddesses with tamarin-rice (Thindiriyannam) as neivedyam. Chodachopacharam\textsuperscript{10}, a kind of noteworthy deeparadhana with all ritualistic ceremonies in the midst of music of a special instrument called, Suttamattalam in accompaniment of Thalam, is being regularly performed to the Gajasamharamurti in the Gnanasabha is an another remarkable practice, practiced during Erandamkalam. The above said yantra which is known as 'Arunachaleswarar rahasyam' similar to the 'Chidambara rahasyam'\textsuperscript{11} of the famous Adavalan shrine at Chidambaram, was renewed and kept at its present place by His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam in 1941 A.D.

The singing of Devaram hymns by a hymn - singer (oothuvar) daily during the Sayaratchai and Erandamkala puja in front of Kritivasar, Balangurambal and Gajasamharamurti is still in vogue.
7.3.6. ARTHAJAMA PUJA

During Arthajama puja, between 9 and 10.30 p.m. oblution is held only to the presiding deity. Following the Deeparadhana with food offerings of suttannam (instead of the age-old samba or pepper rice) to Kritivasar and Gajasamhara-murti in succession, Sokkar (the iconographic representation of the presiding deity) is used to be taken in procession to the Palliyarai of the Amman Shrine. The arthajama puja ends with the deeparadhana to Sahasralingam, Balangurambal, Palliyarai Nayaki with Sokkar, Chandesvarar and Bhairaver in usually carried after the performance of the succeeding sandhi puja. The above describe Shatkala pujas are being held in this temple without any break. Further enormous endowments are evidently made lavishly for the proper, regular conduct of Nitya pujas and festivals by deeply religious minded-wealthy people, Nitya pujas are being performed with sandal paste, flowers, fragrant ail smoke, pure water, camphor etc. besides the lighting of lamps in this temple.

7.3.7. PRADHOSA PUJA

It is during the most sacred time i.e. 3 ¾ Nalaigai preceeding and succeeding the sun-set (4.30 to 6.00 p.m) of pradosham on Trayodasi day which comes twice in a month on Valarpirai and Theipirai periods, special ritualistic ceremonies are being observed in this religious institution in honour of Siva's famous Sandhya Nrittam\textsuperscript{12} which is believed by the Hindus to have been performed by him in between the two horns of this vehicle,
Rishabam on that auspicious time at the Mount Kailasa in the presence of his consort, Umadevi for the happiness and welfare of all living beings. On these days the usual sayaratcai puja starts from that Nandi in the Arunachaleswarar Virattam.

Pujas are performed to Nandi, Samharamurti, Ganesa, Kritivasar and Balangurambal in the ascending order in contrary to the usual Nitya Puja practice during Sayaratchi. On these special occasions Panjamuga deepam is shown to Kritivasar. During pradhosam the pradhosa Nayagar is being accustomed to be taken out in procession on Rishabavahana of Silver around the inner prakara, after giving pali at 9 places, following special oblution and other ceremonial pujas to it. The performance of abishegam to the presiding deity alone during Erandamkala puja at the eime of Pradhosam is noteworthy feature. Moreover the period which lasts for 3 ¾ Naligai before the sun-set is treated to by the best and the most sacred time for worshipping Siva. The Sanippradhosam i.e. the pradosham which coincides with Saturday – the day in which Siva drank the poison is being celebrated as a special rather more significantly important pradosham.

7.4. PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PUJAS

There is spiritual significance in the worship. The worshippers on approaching the temple have the darshan of the gopuram first which represents the Lord as the universe. The devotee now realizes that the Lord
Himself has manifested as the physical universe or as the creator. There he gets the idea that he is not the body and he is the soul. Then he goes round the prakaras. At Thiruvannamalai there are five major prakaras representing the anna-maya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya and anandamaya kosas. The devotee relieves himself mentally from these kosas. Then he approaches the flag staff and prays to the Lord to elevate his soul to its spiritual height. At Balipeedam which is near the flag staff, the devotees surrender or kill his anava, karma and maya malas. The nandi in front of the Balipeedam is the pasu or soul looking at the Lord. The devotee gets now the identification of himself as the spirit. At the shrine, the devotee worships the Lord and sees God and try to see God in everything. The coconut’s three eyes represent the three malas. Just like the malas are not removed easily by one self, the Gurukkal representing the grace break the coconut. This is a symbolical removal of the malas by God\textsuperscript{13}.

### 7.5. FESTIVALS

The Tamil word for festival is Vizha (vizhavu). This arises from the root, vizhal, to desire and love; the noun means, the thing desired, the object celebrated. So when the narrow love expands, it expresses itself in the form of festivals and celebrations.

Festivals are fountains of joy for all. They exist in all countries, in all levels of society, in all races, and had been existing through all the ages. If man has been described as a social animal, festivals are the occasions for a
close joyous coming together for the members of the social group, and they
give full expression to the social instinct. Festivals seem to be universal.
They have been natural to man at all claims, in the past and present.

Festivals unite all people and have been a means of uniting people
and of integrating communities from the earliest times. Man does not live in
isolation but lives as a member of society to whose joys and pleasures he
contributes and from which he also receives sustenance. So festivals have
a great value for him\(^{15}\).

Tamil Nadu is land of festivals as it is a land of temples. Festivals are
observed by people not only in temples but also in their houses. "The sanctity
of certain moments and periods of time by association with memorable
events, holy persons, and notable psychic experience is the basic idea
underlying the observance of sacred days and festivals"\(^{16}\).

Festivals are occasions for a joyous get together for the members of a
social group and thus they give full expression to the social and religious
instincts of the people. The festivals always are of a socialistic pattern. The
twenty seven ladies move in their own special way, each of them having
distinct characteristics and attributes that affect our lives. Out of these
luminaries there are those that are deemed to be more auspicious than
others. Some are gently while others severs and much more complex. If
born with an auspicious lady in your sign and other planets in good position,
it is most fortunate.
7.5.1. The twenty seven Natchartrams (ladies) are


The Tamil year begins on Chitirai Ist which usually falls on April 14th. I commence the list of Festivals held in the arunachleswarar Temple from the start of the New Year on Chitirai 1st,

7.5.2. FESTIVALS DETAILS – Evary Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>TAMIL MONTH</th>
<th>FESTIVAL DETAILS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
  3. Thirugnanasambandar Festival-Mula Nakshatram. |
| 3.   | Ani (June - July) | 1. Ani Bramorchavam 10 days. 2. Ani Thirumanjanam.(Lord Nataraja Urchavam 1 day).Uthra Nakshatram  
  3. Manickavasagar Festival –Maga Nakshatram. |
  4. Arunagirinathar Festival. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Karthigai</td>
<td>(Nov. - Dec.)</td>
<td>1. Karthigai Deepa Bramorchavam 10 days. 2.1008 Sangabhishekam-Somavaram.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Margazhi</td>
<td>(Dec. - Jan.)</td>
<td>1. Vaikunda Ekadasi Urchavam 1 day. 2. Arudra Darisanam (Lord Nataraja Urchavam) 1 day. 3. Manickavasagar Utsavam - 10 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>(Jan. - Feb.)</td>
<td>1. Uthrayana Punyakala Bramorchavam 10 days. 2. Thiruvoodal Urchavam 1 day. 3. Manalurpettai Theerthavari Urchavam 1 day. 4. Kalasapakkam (Rathasapthami) 5. Theerthavari Urchavam 1 day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Panguni</td>
<td>(March - April)</td>
<td>Panguni Uthiram Thirukalyana Urchavam 6 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.5.3. Chitirai

29.03.2008 - Vasantha Utsavam (10 day festival)
13.04.2008 - Tamil New Year
14.04.2008 - Somavara Abishekam
20.04.2008 - Burning of Manmatha
30.04.2008 - Sri Appar Swamis birthday
10.05.2008 - Subramania Utsavam

Vasantha Utsavam is a ten days festival depicting the blossoming of love. During this sacred event, Swami and Amman are eminently decorated with many jewels. With the Temple Elephant fanning them with shamara grass, they are taken with great ceremony in Maha Pradakshina round the sacred Mahizha Trees within the there prakaram, ten times every night for ten days = one hundred times.

On the third day, the birth of Manmathan, also known as Dhaganam, and Kama the god of Love (lust) is depicted. He is looking for Siva. When 9 p.m arrives on the fifth and eighth days, the Temple lights are switched off and in the dark after the tenth round of the Sacred Trees the lights are turned on once more, to great rejoicing. On Chitirai Natchatram, the tenth and final day, Siva opens His third eye and the burning of the effigy of Manmathan takes place. During this sacred period the Jumbokeswara Linga, which is inset in stone on the raised platform in the midst of the Sacred
Mahizha Trees, is filled to capacity with water. Inside the recess of the Linga, plants and flowers float and make the Linga appear as if it is levitating and blossoming. Sri Appar swami’s birthday takes place on Sathayam Natchatram day. Sri Appar Swami is taken in a chariot round the Maha Veedi.

7.5.4. CHAITRA VISHU (The Hindu New Year Day)

The Hindu New Year's Day commences on the first day of the month going by the name Chaitra or Chithirai. It is also called Chaitra Vishu for the reason that it commences in the month of Chithirai or Chithirai or Charita. The occasion is said to be an auspicious one because the Sun then enters the sign Aries of the Zoiac. The people call the occasion Chaitra Vishnu Punyakalam’ or sacred occasion.

7.5.5. CHITRA-POURNAMI

The Hindu festival going by the name of Chitra-Pournami is observed on the full-moon day in the month of Chithirai or Chaitra corresponding to the English month April-May, when the asterism' Chitra' (virginis) holds sway. It is a festival observed to propitiate 'Chitra-Gupta' the chief accountant of Yama, who is believed to record the commission and omissions of men to punish or reward them after their death19.

7.5.6. Vaikasi

19.05.2008 - Kambathu Elayanar Murugan's Abishekam on Visakam Natchattam. Subramania taken around Maha Veedi.

22.05.2008 - Sri Sambandar's Birthday on Moolam
Natchatram.

7.5.7. VAIKASI    VISAKA

The festival Vaikasi Visaka is observed on the day when the asterism Visaka (Libra) rules in the month of Vaikasi, called also vaisaka, corresponding to the English month May-June. It is the full-moon day of the month and the celebration of the festival is offering worship to Dharmaputra, the God of death. The day is also said to be one in which God Subramanya incarnated in this world when this asterism Visaka was in the ascendant. Hence this festive occasion is said to be doubly important and meritorious\textsuperscript{20}.

7.5.8. AANI

09.07.2008   - Sri Nataraja Utsavam

07.07.2008   - Dhatchanayan Utsavam (10 days – half flag) Half Year Festival (Swami around Maha Veedi)

06.07.2008   - Manickavacakar's birthday on Aayielyam Natchatram.

16.07.2008   - Lowering of flag

Sri Nataraja utsavam – Ten Day Festival, Sri Nataraja is taken to the one Thousand Pillar Mandapam in the fifth prakaram the previous night fully jewelled and decorated. At 10 a.m. on Utthiram Natchatram Sri Nataraja leaves the Temple by route of the south facing Thirumanjana Gopuram, and is then taken in Pradakshina around the Maha Veedi\textsuperscript{21}. 
Parvathi Amman Utsavam lasts for ten days completing its cycle on Pooram Natchatram. On the first day of the festival the flag is hoisted above the Amman Temple in the third prakaram of the Temple. Every day Apeethakuchalambal is taken around the Maha Veedi. On Pooram Natchatram; the Valai Kappoo (Bangle) Ceremony takes place in the Valai kapoo Mandapam in the fifth prakaram. This Mandapam is just behind the Murugan Temple.

On the same day the flag is lowered and the Fire walking takes place in front of the Amman Temple until midnight. Then once again the Mother rounds the Maha Veedi before retiring. Sri Sundaramoorthy Utsavam on Swathy Natchatram is a one day festival which commences at 5.a.m with Abishekam. Fully decorated with jewels and other garments, Sri Sundaramoorthy is taken in glorious procession, accompanied by special musicians playing drums and flutes around the third prakaram.
When this pradakshina is completed, the procession moves out of the Arunachaleswarar Temple through the Thittee Vassal (door way) to the Durga Amman Temple, which is on the main road leading to the bus depot in Thiruvannamalai. In the afternoon at the Durga Amman Temple, pandits (learned teachers of Hindu religion, history etc.) give sermons on Sri Sundaramoorthy's life. When this is completed Sri Sundaramoorthy is taken once again on the journey back through the crowded streets to the Arunachaleswarar Temple. Meanwhile, within the Arunachaleswarar Temple, Sri Chandrasekara is being beautifully decorated, and after much preparation is carried to the Kambathu Elayanar Murugan Temple in the fifth prakaram and then to the Thittee vassal (door way).

The crowd becomes immense outside the small Thittee Vasal gateway of the Temple where everyone waits with great expectancy for the procession to arrive. The night is dark when it does appear. Additionally, all the lights have been extinguished. The procession waits in the dark for ten minutes for Sri Chandrasekara and Sri Sundaramoorthy to rendezvous at the entrance, and when they do, the lights are turned on once more. Sri Chandrasekara and Sri Sundaramoorthy, riding on a silver elephant, join together in their pradakshina round the Maha Veedi. They stop at intervals, sometimes for as long as two hours, to give dharshan to the enormous crowd of worshippers. All the time the musicians play their glorious tunes. The procession returns to the Temple by five the following morning.22
7.5.10. ADI – PURAM

This Hindu festival of Adi Puram is celebrated in all Hindu temples in southern India in the month called Adi or Ashada, corresponding to the English month July- August, when the asterism 'Puram' (Delta Leonis ) is in the ascendancy. The festival is one intended to propitiate the Goddess Sakti Devi who is said to have come into this world on this occasion to bless the people. People therefore worship her to secure happiness not only for themselves but also for those whom they love. If the Adi – Puram festival day happens to fall on a Friday, the occasion is considered to be highly meritorious, and the people in consequence worship the Goddess then with more than ordinary devotion\textsuperscript{23}.

7.5.11. Avani

17.08.2008 - Sri Chandrasekara Utsavam
17.08.2008 - Kambarthu Elayanar Abishekam – Visakam Natchtram
15.08.2008 - Sri Varalakshmi Viratham. Special Abishekam to Unnamulaiyamman.
15.08.2008 - Nataraja Abishekam
03.09.2008 - Vinayanar Chaturthi
Red Sambandar Vinayagar in third prakaram.
Special abishekam. Musicians etc. Sri Krishna Chaturthi
11.09.2008 - Special Abishekam Venugopal (Vishnu) in second prakaram.
11.09.2008 - Kambathu Elayanar Abishekam- Visakam Natchatram
08.09.2008 - Pittu Tiruvizha – Mula Nakshatram.
7.5.12. AVANI MULAM
The religious day of `Avani Mula` falls in the month of Badrapada called in Tamil Avani corresponding to the English month August-September. This month and especially this day is said to be under the influence of the asterism Mulam (Scorpionis) and its presiding deity is an Asura named `Nirriti.`

7.5.13. VINAYAKA CHATURTI
The Hindu ceremony going by the names Vinayaka Chaturti and Ganesh Chaturti is of perennial interest to the Hindus all over India. It is a Viratha observed on the fourth day in the bright fortnight of the month Badrapadha called in Tamil Avani corresponding to the English month August—September, to obtain knowledge of things and success in all undertakings. There is not a Hindu ceremony but commences with a puja to this deity. The reason for this is obvious. Grit and strength of will are necessary for success in all undertakings. Intelligence also must play its part well. The trunk of this elephant-headed deity symbolises grit and strength of will and the head of the elephant symbolises wisdom, so by worshipping Vinayaka, one makes up his mind to use grit and strength of will, wisely, in the undertaking he is going to set his hands to.

7.5.14. Purattasi
14.09.2008 - Sri Chandrasekara Utsavam
18.09.2008 - Kambathu Elayanar Abishekam- Visakam Natchatram
20.09.2008 - Sri Nataraja Special Abishekam
05.10.2008 - Arunagirinathar Swami birthday on Moolam Natchatram, Sermons and Bhajans.
08.10.2008 - Saraswathi Puja.
09.10.2008 - Amman around Maha Veedi.

Amman is dressed in Alangaram of different styles representing Her diverse functions during the ten day Navarathiri Festival.

Day One Parasakthi Alangaram.
Day Two Raja Rajeswari Alangaram.
Day Three Gaja Lakshmi Alangaram.
Day Four Manonmani Alangaram
Day Five Rishaba Alangaram.
Day Six Andal Alangaram.
Day Seven Saraswathi Alangaram
Day Eight Lingapooji Alangaram.
Day Nine Mahishasuramardani Alangaram.

On the tenth and final day Amman is taken in great procession around the Maha Veedi returning to the Temple after having destroyed Mahishasuran.

7.5.15. NAVA RATRI

Navaratri or the holy nine nights is a period of festivity observed by the Hindus for nine days or rather nights after sunset in temples in the month of Purattasi corresponding to the English month September-October
commencing on the first day in the bright fortnight of the month every year. The object or aim with which it is observed is said to be to propitiate the Goddess symbolising every possible kind of energy in the universe, with a view to obtain perpetual happiness and prosperity.

Many of the greatest philosophers of the world are of opinion that nature builds everything by ‘forms and numbers.’ Geometry is the science of form and Arithmetic is the science of numbers. The former may be said to be specially related to Architecture while the latter makes order and limitation possible in the universe. It is a very interesting fact to note that Devi-worship, if at all it is to be effective, should be by means of yantras or geometrical figures engraved on metal plates having within the figures or numerical digits, or alphabets of words, arranged in a particular order.

7.5.16. AIPASI

17.10.2008 - Sri Chandrasekara Utsavam.
27.10.2008 - Deepavali
12.11.2008 - Sri Chandarasekara Utsavam.
13.11.2008 - Kambathu Elayanar Abishekam – Visakam Nakshatram
29.10.2008 to 03.11.2008 - Sri Sknadashasti Utsavam.
11.11.2008 - Annabishekam – Asvini Nakshatram

Sri Skandashasti Utsavam lasts for six days. Lord Kandha is taken in procession round the Maha Veedi for approximately one and a half hours, commencing at eight in the morning. Before leaving the Temple Kandha
goes in procession to the Mother Temple in the third prakaram where he obtains the Vel with which He destroys Sura Padman. On the sixth and final day of Skandashasti, a special one hundred thousand Archana is performed.

7.6. KARTHIGAI

17.12.2008 - Kambathu Elayanar Abishekam-Visakam Natchatram
21.11.2008 - Parasakthi Utsavam
21.11.2008 - Manickavacakar's Thiruvila celebration
29.11.2008 to 15.12.2008 - Kartigai Deepam Festival

7.6.1. KARTHIGAI DEEPAM FESTIVAL

We should know in detail about this annual holy beacon festival. Brahma and Vishnu were both quarrelling about their relative superiority. To give a decision on it and to remove their ego Lord Siva stood before them in the form of a blazing mountain. Having failed in their attempt to find out its top and bottom the two prayed to Lord Siva for His grace. He blessed them saying that he would appear in the form of Jothi on the top of the hill every year on the day of Karthigai in the month of Karthigai. To commemorate this event the Deepam festivals is being celebrated at Thiruvannamalai every year. There is ample literary evidence to prove that this lighting festival is one of the oldest in Tamil country. Tholkappiam is the oldest extent work in Tamil literature. In commenting on one of the Sutras in Tholkappiam,
Nachinarkiniar, the prince of commentators, mentions "the light lit on the Karthigai day of the Karthigai month". Scholars ascribe the age of Tholkappiam to be three thousand years old. Jeevaka Chintamani, a Jain work and one of the five great Tamil Epics by Thirthakka Devar mentions "lighting a lamp on the hill on Karthigai day". Karnarpathu and Kalavazhinarpathu, the two old Tamil literary works refer to lighting on Karthigai day. Saints Appar and Sambandar who hailed in the 7th century A.D. make references in this respect. There is a proverbial saying "light on the hill" when one wants to express a thing world-wide known. This bears eloquent testimony to the antiquity of the lighting festival on the hill.

Of the five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether, fire is considered important as being in the middle. Adding Sun, Moon and Soul to these it is said that God exposes Himself in eight forms "Ashtamurthams". So the Vedas, Agamas and Puranas extol God as Rudragni Sivajothi and Paramjudar. Just as fire destroys impurity in anything, God destroys the darkness of ignorance and egoism in men and blesses them with the light of wisdom. This is the philosophic truth behind the celebration of the festival. Something should be said about the festival proper which will be of use to devout pilgrim. The Karthigai Deepam festival is celebrated in the Tamil month of Karthigai (November-December). It begins on Uttradam day with flag hoisting and goes on for nine days.
Between the raising and the lowering of the flag, the temple is celebratly of two kinds of activity during the day: each morning and evening the five deities, Siva, the goddess, Subrahmanya, Ganapati, and Chandikesvara, go around the car-streets in procession; before leaving, they present themselves in front of the sacrificial hall where the fire-ritual is performed twice a day, and receive on their foreheads a protective black spot made of ash mixed with ghee. On the seventh day the same deities, each on a huge wooden car, are led in turn around the four temple streets in a procession which lasts the whole day.

In the early hours of the tenth day Bharani Deepam in five agantams will be lit in Arunachaleswarar's Sannithi. In the evening the Pancha Murthis will be brought to the Katchimandapam. At duck (Pradosha) the Karthigai day synchronising with the full moon day, the deity, Ardhanariswarar is taken out to this place with the five deepams which are put in a big receptacle near the flag-stuff. At the same time the beacon light on the hill is lit. The huge concourse of devotees from all parts of our country in a million voices raises a cry simultaneously "Harohara to Annamalai" which will rend the air. It is a sight for the Gods to see. On the hill top there is a big copper turn in which large quantities of camphor, ghee and wicks (of cloths) are poured and when these are lighted it will be seen from miles around for somedays after the Deepam festival day. We do not have such a huge light in any other place of our country. On the same night the eleven storeyed Gopuram is also lit.
with "Ahals" (earthern oil lamps) set in rows in all the storeys. Though this festival is special to Thiruvannamalai it is common through the Tamil country. Lighting festival is celebrated in all the temples of South India including Vishnu temples. All the houses will also be illuminated with number of lamps being arranged in rows to give elegant appearance.

It is ordained that a pilgrim to Thiruvannamalai for this festival should take one meal on the previous (Bharani) day, worship Bharani Deepam during the early hours on the Karthigai Deepam day, go round the hill walking the entire distance of eight miles, see on the way Adi (Ani) Annamalai temple and fasting completely that day should see the lighting that evening. He should take food only the next day. The intrinsic truth about seeing the light may be summed up thus; "Body is the hill; mind the vessel; love the wick; incessant meditation the ghee; breath the camphor and wisdom the fire. To light this flame and dispel the darkness is the effect produced on one who sees the light".

7.6.2. DEEPAM - THE SYMBOL OF LORD ARUNACHALA

According to tradition this practice came into existence following a dispute between Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma over who was the superior of the two after the some hindrance to their attempts to gauge their strength, the two prayed to Lord Siva for his Grace. Their test was to find the top and the bottom of a blazing mount which was actually Siva. Lord Siva blessed
lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma and said that he would appear as a Jothi (flame) on top of the hill. It is to perpetuate this event that the flame is lit on top of the holy hill during the month of Karthigai (November - December).

This festival begins in the Uthiradam (Star) day in Karthigai and winds up with the Bharani Deepam lit in the early hours of the tenth day. The Deepam is lit at dusk, coinciding with a Full Moon. The Deepam can be seen even from a distance of 45 Km. Real image of lord Arunachala is viewed in the appearance of "Agni". This is celebrated every year as the remembrance of one of the image of lord Arunachala as fire. During the holy day, more than 10, 00,000 devotees get this heavenly worship of Lord. Karthigai Maha Deepam festival is daily activities as mentioned below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Karthigai deepam festival</th>
<th>Morning Thiruvila</th>
<th>Evening / Night Thiruvila</th>
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<td>Sri Durgambal on Kamadenu Vahanam</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>First Thiruvizha</strong></td>
<td>Panchamoorthies the five deities Silver Chariot</td>
<td>Panchamoorthies Mooshigan ayil (Peacock), Adihara Nandi (Bull), in a Rishaba Chariots.</td>
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<td><strong>Second Thiruvizha</strong></td>
<td>Sri Vinayakar , Sri Chandrasekara Vimanams (Chariots) of Sooriya Prabha; the Sun.</td>
<td><strong>Panchamoorthies</strong> Silver Indra Vimanam Chariots</td>
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<td>Sri Vinayakar Sri Chandrasekara in new Vahanams</td>
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<td>1008 Sanka Abishekam Sri Vinayakar Sri Chandrasekara Vimanams-Naga(Cobra) Vahanam</td>
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<td>05.12.2008</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Event Description</td>
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<td>06.12.2008</td>
<td>Fifth Thiruvizha - Sr. Vinayakar Sri Chandrasekara Glass Rishaba Vahanams Silver Elephant</td>
<td>Silver Mooshigan Silver Mayil Large Silver Bull Rishaba Vahanam</td>
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<td>08.12.2008</td>
<td>Seventh Thiruvizha - Big Wooden Chariot The Maha Radham around roads of town</td>
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<td>09.12.2008</td>
<td>Eighth Thiruvizha - Sr. Vinayakar Sri Chandrasekara Silver Chariot</td>
<td>Start with Hors Vahanams etc at night. 4 p.m. Pichandavar in Golden Meru</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.12.2008</td>
<td>Tenth Thiruvizha - Mahadeepam Day 4 a.m. Maha Barani Day time Tank Tirtham Ceremony 4.00 a.m.</td>
<td>In Golden Vimanams 6 p.m. Deepam fire on top of Mountain.</td>
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<td>12.12.2008</td>
<td>Tank Ceremony - Sri Chandrasekara Boating Festival</td>
<td>In Golden Rishaba</td>
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<td>13.12.2008</td>
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<td>15.12.2008</td>
<td>Sri Chandikeswarar Festival</td>
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The Karthigai Festival lasts for ten days. Every day it is a joyful spiritual experience. The final Thiruvilzha commences in the early hours of the tenth day with the Bharani Deepam, culminating in the awe inspiring sight of the lighting of the Great Maha Jyothi Deepam, on the top of the Holy Aruna Mountain at 6.00 p.m.

From the first to the final day, glorious ceremony is taking place within the Temple and the chariots (Ther) are seen in the streets of Thiruvannamalai. On the fifth day along with other Thers, the Rishaba (bull) chariot bearing Swami and Amman is taken in procession, accompanied by the chief priests. This is followed on consecutive days by Gold and Silver Chariots. On the seventh day, the Maha Radham; the massive wooden
Ther is taken through the streets from 5.00 a.m. to 6.00 the following day. On the ninth day, the Raveneswaram Chariot.

The lengthy processions of small Chappararams, booths which hold the minor deities, are also displayed on the streets, of Thiruvannamalai on one day of the festival. The Chapparsms are carried around by school boys, with the aid of wooden poles, which are inserted into ringed openings on the sides,

The crowded processions are extremely varied and gloriously displayed with different kinds of ornamentation. These processions extend from the early morning until well into the night over the full ten days of the festival. At night, the Ther charitors are well in with coloured lights which show clearly in the early darkness. Many of these chariots have their own large generators, which provide the power for the lights.

The Ther pulled around the streets of Thiruvannamalai are a lovely sight. A few of them are mounted on vehicles, but the majority are either carried or pulled by thousands of devotees. The biggest of them is the Maha Radham; made of Wooden and this is Ther carrying Annamalaiyar and Unnamulaiamman.

The Maha Radham Ther is gigantic, absolutely beautiful with massive wooden wheels and statues of four white prancing horses in front. It has a roof of five tiers with garlands, hanging from the lowest and a spire at the very top. The Maha Radham is the largest of all the Thers, yet it has no
vehicle to propel it. Thousands of devotees arrive in Thiruvannamalai intent being amongst the crowds, who have the distinction of propelling the great wooden chariot.

Due to its colossal size, the Maha Radham Chariot moves very slowly with large wooden props placed under the back wheels, so that greater control and support are achieved. These thick wooden levers are inserted under the wheels, and with great earnestness selected ones jump up and down on them, so that the great. There is moved forward. All this jumping on the back of wooden levers is accompanied by a fanfare of shouts, so that hundreds of 'Pulles', holding onto lines of thick stout ropes in the front of the Maha Radham, know the exact moment the 'Jumpers' at the back have completed their work. Then, with the utmost care and precision, necessary due to the mighty weight and size, and with loud shouts and chanting, in one great heave, the Maha Radham Ther moves off. But only for a few places, to be halted so that it can all start again.

All this time way above the crowd inside the Maha-Ther, Gurukkals stand passing down sacred vibhuti and flowers from their active devotion to Father Arunachaleswarar and Mother Apeethakuchalambal. The Divine couple who sit majestically within the great chariot, spreading their glorious light upon the heads of everyone in that blessed place. Accompanied by music and song this wonderful colourful display fills the town of
Thiruvannamalai over the festival period, bringing enormous crowds of worshippers and sightseers together.

At 4.00 a.m. in the early hours the Bharani Deepam in five agantams are lit in Arunachaleswarar's Sannithi. In the evening, just before the flame is placed on the Maha Beacon, the Panchamoorhis are brought to the Katchi Mandapam. At dusk Arunachaleswarar is taken out to the five Deepams and them, the breathtaking experience of the Maha Jyothi Deepam takes place, and fills the Soul. This is wonderful to experience and glorious to behold. The sight must be seen in all its wonder.

On the tenth and final day, everyone who has been able to obtain an entrance ticket to the Temple is there, filling every available space to overflowing. All on the pinnacle of expectancy worshipping Arunachaleswarar Siva. Magnificent worship is taking place within those sacred walls all the time. It is wonderful witnessing this devotion to Arunachaleswarar especially on this final day. At the same time as the Pachamoorthis are worshipped in the Katchi Mandapam, the Maha Bharani Deepam is being ignited on top of the Linga Mountain.

The Maha Jyothi Deepam glows from the top of the Holy – Aruna Mountain – Linga. At night, when everything is so dark that nothing else can be seen, when even the shadow of the Mountain is not visible, the flame of the beacon of fire, burnings, on top of the Mountain, can be witnessed for miles around. This fire looks as if it is burning without any visible support.
around it. The flame shoots, upwards, glowing in the midst of the dark sky, appearing as if it is signaling from the heavens calling out to the entire world, so that everyone can hear the magnetic call of Arunachaleswarar Siva. As the torch is put to the Maha Jyothi Deepam, a tremendous call from thousands of throats is heard from the enormous crowd of worshippers inside the Temple of Arunachaleswarar, crying in one mighty voice

ARUNACHALA SIVA,
ARUNACHALA SIVA,
ARUNACHALA
ARUNACHALA SIVA,
ARUNACHALA SIVA,
ARUNACHALA

AROHARA AROHARA AROHARA

Then, in the darkness the clouds cover and the rain showers, down onto the Deepam and onto the raised waiting heads of the crowd of devotees as if anointing, blessing everyone present at that Holy Place30.

As an annual festival feature, when the moon shows its whole disc illuminated in the month of Karthigai the celebration becomes a week long temple function. A big brass vessel especially designed in the form of a lamp is lifted to the peak of the hill; it is filled with tins and tins of ghee and pots and pots of butter; and an enormously thick wick made of loosely twisted woven fibers (clothes) is immersed into the vessel and one end of the wick is drawn out to the apex and is ignited with burning camphor and the thick wick fully soaked in ghee acting by capillary attraction conveys the ghee the main
illuminant to the flame around 6 pm when the sunlit full moon disc emerges from the east and comes on to the horizon. The luminous glow of the lamp atop the hill opens the eyes of millions of people to something divine and auspicious and ardent devotees and others see in the burning light lord of the world and remain visibly, moved with their mouths uttering "Om Arunachaleswaraya Namaha", Here man lights the largest wick of the largest lamp once a year and the world goes into rapture sings his songs of grace\textsuperscript{31}.


(First night of the lighting of Arunachala Deepam)

13 December, 2005  Tuesday

3 December, 2006  Sunday

24 November, 2007  Saturday

11 December, 2008  Thursday

1 December, 2009  Tuesday

7.7. MARIGAZHI

01.01.2009  -  Manickavacakar's Thiruvizha (continues)
13.01.2009  -  Siva Dharshan to Manickavacakar etc Thiruvaadhirai Natchatram Day
01.01.2009  -  Sri Chandrasekara utsavam
02.01.2009  -  Kambathu Elayanar Abishekam – Visakam Natchatram
05.01.2009  -  Uthrayana Punaya kalam flag raising to 10 days. Half
7.7.1. ARUDRA

The Hindu Arudra festival is observed in the month of Margasira called also Margazhi, corresponding to the English month December-January, when the asterism Arudra (orionis) holds sway. The occasion is one especially favorable to propitiate the dancing aspect of Siva (Nataraja) by worshipping him. The asterism going by the name 'Arudra' has for its presiding deity 'Rudra' and aspect of the destructive force in the universe symbolised. There is a mystical allegory regarding the dancing aspect of Siva. The key for the understanding of the hidden meaning conveyed by the allegorical myth lies in the word 'Dancing.' It stands for the expression 'Vibration.' We all know that intense vibration shakes off impurities and makes objects highly luminous and brilliant\textsuperscript{32}.

7.7.2. THAI

14.01.2009 - Sri Chandrasekara Utsavam
14.01.2009 - Thai Pongal Harvest Festival
15.01.2009 - Mattu Pongal Festival of Cattle.
15.01.2009 - Thiruvoodal Thiruvizha.
18.01.2009 - Sri Chandrasekara – Teertham Thenpennai River Festival
05.02.2009 - Kannappa Nayanar Guru Puja,
08.02.2009 - Thai Kavadi, on Thai Poosam Natchatram Day.
Thai Pongal Harvest Festival is followed by Mattu Pongal the Festival of cattle and Thiruvoodal Festival. During this period the five Nandis, the Prodosha Nandi in the Moolastanam, the Ratha Vilaku Nandi in the second prakaram, Kodi, Kampathu Nandi in the third prakaram, the Chinna Nandi in the fourth prakaram, and the Peria Nandi that stands in front of the Vallala Gopuram in the fifth prakaram, are all beautifully decorated with garlands of flowers, vadai, bananas, cereals and other sweet foods of a variety of descriptions together with unshelled rice on Thiruvoodal, the eluyntharule [Utsavar] statue of Arunachalaleswarar is carried by numerous attendant devotees on a special chariot, covered with a large gorgeously decorated sunshade.

After the senior member of the Peria Pattam-{Big Group), or a senior member of Chinna Pattam, - (Small Groups). The present holder of the Peria Pattam is Sathasiva Gurukkal, Ulthurai Pattamaniam. Thijagaraja Gurukkal is the senior member of the Chinna Patam, - Small Group – who holds the hereditary title of Elavarasu Pattam – Young Prince. This distinguished title was bestowed on his family many years ago by an ancient ruler. Before leaving the Temple Swami gives His blessing He goes to the Kodi Kampathu Nandi in front on the flagstaff facing the Sivan Kovil in the third prakaram and gives dharshan to Nadi as Veerat – Swarrupam, symbolizing the
movement heavenwards. Swami as Ekapathamoorthy, stands on one foot giving dharshan to the Devas. Swami then gives dharshan once more, this time as Priest. When this is completed, Swami Divides into three and gives His blessing, representing the Trinity of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu.

Dharshan is given in front of the Killi Gopuram to the eleven Rudra representatives of Siva. Then Dharshan is given to the fifty eight thousand Munis, Rishis and other Siddhas, Vidyadhara (learned people). In fact, dharshan is given to everyone as the cavalcade rounds the Maha – Veedhi three times. The three times that aleade rounds the Maha Veedhi three times. The three times that Swami rounds the Maha Veedhi represents three times round the Creator, the Destroyer and the Guardian, which are all Himself – Siva.

The procession which commences at dawn and completed by sunset, travels around the Maha Veedi three times. Starting from the Inner Temple of Siva it passes through the Temple grounds. When reaching the Fifth Prakaram, it advances through the small Thittee Vasal gateway entering the Sixth Prakaram.

The wonderful cavalcade, with the senior Gurukkal looking replendent in his special robes, passes through the open Sixteen Pillar Mandapam into Theradi Veedhi (The Street of the Chariot Procession), the Seventh Prakaram. There, moving slowly, due to the enormous crowd of
worshippers, the chariot circuits the Temple three times on its journey. Then as night approaches the lengthy journey around the Linga Mountain begins.

In the early morning, the Mother waits inside the Sivan Temple, when upon Siva’s return. He finds Her door closed. Sri Sundaramoorthy acts as the mediator between them. Then Siva enters amidst the crowds of worshippers. The breath taking sight within the Siva Temple is most wonderful to behold. Jointly the Divine Couple come out of the Siva Temple giving Dharshan to everyone in the second prakaram as Anugraha. The excellent account concerning this festival recalls.

There was a Rishi, called Bringi who only worshipped Siva. He never worshiped the Mother Uma. Bring did great penance, worshipping Siva for centuries. Then when Siva went to confer enlightenment on Bringi the Mother of All, opposed this provision, saying that Bringi should also worship Her before he obtained illumination.

The Voodal comes at this point. The word, Voodal means Petty Quarrel. Ambal expresses that She is displeased with Siva for granting enlightenment to Bringi Maharishi. "He should also worship me. You have the Ganga on your head. I am very displeased with you". Thus she returns to her quarters. Siva gives enlightenment on His own to Bringi.

Sri Chandrasekara is taken to Manalurpet from Tirtham, approximately 30 kilometers from Thiruvannamamai. The large procession leaves at midnight on the 4th and reaches Manalurpet at 8 a.m. on the
morning of the 5th. Twenty small temples send their Utsavar Deities to Manalurpet. At the special time of twelve, noon, Siva's Sulam is immersed in the Thenpennai River Tirham by the Chief Priest.

Thaikavadi Thai poosam is the January penance that takes place for Lord Palani Andaver on Poosam Natchatram day. The kavadi, which is an impressive sight stars from Swami Arunagirinathar's Temple and rounds the Maha Veedhi, seventh prakaram, with one hundred and eight Kavadis or more.

7.7.3. MASI

23.02.2009 - Sri Chandrasekara – Maha Veedhi.
09.03.2009 - Sri Nataraja Utsavam.
09.03.2009 - Masi Makam
02.03.2009 - Kambathu Elayanar Abishekam- Visakam Natchatram
23.02.2009 - Maha Sivarathri

Maha Sivarathri is of special importance as this is the place of Lingasthana. It is here that Siva appeared as luminous pillar before Brahma and Vishnu. There is also the sacred tradition, that the Linga in the Moolastrnam was bestowed at that auspicious time.

When Brahma and Vishnu paid homage to Siva and those personal articles were used to glorify Him, the lamps, sacrificial threads, garlands, incense, camphor, sandal – paste and many other glorious objects that constitute the excellent worship for the adoration of the Lord of All. These
splendid articles were established as precedence, so that Siva may be worshipped with such glorification forever. Delighted with the excellent admiration paid to Him, together with the veneration in His honour, the astounding Esvara Siva proclaimed a Holy Day in remembrance of that adoration to be made famous as Sivarathi – The Holiest of Holy Days.

Glorified in the dark half of the month, Mahesivarathri is performed when Chaturdasi extends up to midnight and is the path designed for us in this world of form for reawakening into the full Divine Light – the Light of Truth. The day is the period that most of us have to work, although there are many people who have night duties to perform. After working hard during the day, we also try to find extra time for other activities. This is when we meet our family and friends, go to clubs and try to do things that benefit others. So that, when night arrives we begin to stretch and yawn. Most of us find it difficult to stay awake and are ready for sleep. Naturally tired after doing our many duties and activities, it is nor surprising that we need the rest so that we can get up to fresh start following day.

When the auspicious time of Maha Sivarathri begins, it is six in the evening. While most of us are not tired at that time, as the auspicious period continues its way throughout the night to complete its cycle at six in the morning we can become very tired because we are not used to going without rest.
However, because Sivarathri is the special time, the night dedicated to Siva, it is the time when we must make every effort to stay awake. It is necessary for us to stay awake because when we keep from sleep on that special – night, it is just like turning all that is dark within us into light. On that special night, we observe a fast (Viratham), not only giving up food in the physical sense, but also spiritually giving up unwanted thoughts that hinder our progress.

Siva is the One who is the Supreme Reality. He is the Self-Existent, Self Luminous. He is the One Infinite, Eternal, Part less, Subtle and Taintless. Siva is perfect and absolute. He is the Imperishable-Supreme-Self, who is full of Eternal-Goodness. Full of Eternal-Consciousness, He is the Infinite cause of the universe. He is also its Witness. Siva is the One-Transcendental-Reality whose nature is One; uniform and undivided. He is the Embodiment of Knowledge; Janavigraha.

Siva is the Revealing-Revealer of all objects of experience. He is also the experience of all experiences. Siva is full of Eternal-Consciousness. Siva is Self-proved, Auspicious and Good. Within Him are the past, the present and the future- He is the Lord-of-All-Time. Endowed with All-Powers Siva creates the worlds with His power which is called Prakriti. He controls Prakriti from within Himself.

On Maha Sivarathri the Arunachaleswarar Temple is full with many worshippers doing pradashina within the third and second prakarams. The
Moolastanam overflows with devotees, all anxious to be there when the great chanting of names and the special Abishekam is being performed. The path round the Holy Linga Mountain is also crowded with devotees, all walking around the Siva Linga. Maha Sivarathri is a very auspicious time when devotees think back to the origin of the Linga which resides on the earth at this spot. The worshipper understands that this is Lingasthana. They try as mush as they possibly can to worship on Maha Sivarathri with the prescribed articles of devotion, flower garlands, camphor, water bells, sandal paste and much more.

The Temple of Arunachaleswarar has been built at the foot of the Holy Aruna Linga Mountain. As devotees walk from prakaram to prakaram within the Temple grounds and look at all the structures that have been built from ancient, time, they walk with Siva. And as they pass over stone and under Gopuram they join with all those ancient peoples in their devotion to Him. Within their heart and soul they hold onto Siva who is this place.  

### 7.7.4. PANGUNI

26.03.2009  -  Sri chandrasekara-Maha Veedhi  
08.04.2009  -  Panguni Utthiram-Five day Festival  
09.04.2009  -  Sri Chandrasekara Tirtham at Kelnathur  
10.04.2009  -  Arunachaleswarar Swami and Amman to Kalyana Mandapam. Third Prakaram  
Panguni Utthiram the celebration of the marriage of Siva with His Sakti takes place on this auspicious Natchatram in the Kalyana Mandapam (Wedding Hall). On this wedding day Shastri Brahmins arrive from the Sri Ramana Ashram to recite the Shastrams-holy verses-and conduct the wedding according to sacred rites. In the evening the Divine couples are carried around the third prakaram, through the Temple, and around the streets in the seventh prakaram. On the fifth day the Lord goes to Kumaran Temple (south side) where special alangaram takes place. The Kalyana Mandapam, in the third prakaram of the temple, is usually locked, but this in one of the major festivals when it is possible to go inside and see this highly decorated hall. The Mandapam is also opened on Karthigai Deepam, Thiru Vilakku Puja and on other festivals.

7.8. PHILOSOPHICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FESTIVALS

Festivals have their own symbolical meaning. Whatever may be the name of the festival, it will be celebrated after the performance of worship in the form of a procession. All festivals may be in a way included in the Mahotsava or grand annual festival which is celebrated for ten days with the hoisting of flag and lowering the flag intercepted by procession of the festival deities on various vehicles holy marriage, car festival and holy dip.

On the previous day evening before the flag hoisting a ceremony called ‘mrthsangraha’ or taking the soil for putting the seed for generation is conducted. This denotes that the universe would multiply with enormous
vegetation so that the people would get good harvest. The flag staff is the Lord; the thread is the grace of the Lord the flag represents the soul; the dharba grass tied on the flag staff is the bonds. Hoisting of the flag refers to the elevation of soul and attainment of the Lord; by the grace of the Lord by removing the bonds.

The first festival is celebrated in order to emphasize the distinction between the physical body which is material and perishable, and the soul which is non- material and spiritual and eternal. By this celebration, the individual has to distinguish himself from body. The second day festival relates further deepening of the soul. This celebration is conducted in order to make the soul realize that he is different from the subtle body or suksma deha. The devotee has to pray to the Lord to bestow this realization. The third day festival is conducted to pray for the removal of three gunas – sattva, rajasa and tamas; three kinds of karmas – agamiya, sancita and prarabdha; the attainment of the world, its objects and woman; the three births – past, present and future, etc. the forth day festival is celebrated for the removal of antahkaranas – mind, buddhi, citta and ahamkara; the births that take place through the egg, seed, gynaecea and sweat.

The celebration of the fifth day festival implies the removal of the materialistic activities of the five senses, five kinds of states, Jagrat swapna, suspti and turiya, turiyatita; and the five fold malas anava, karma, maya, mayayi and tirodhayi. If the soul is not free from these it cannot attain liberation. The sixth day festival is celebrated for the purpose of making one
to realize that the six adhvas kaladhva, tattvaadhva, bhuvanadhva, vannadhva, padadhva and mantradha. The six padamuktis – Brahma saloka, Brahma samipya, Brahma sayujya, Vishnu saloka, Vishnu samipya and Vishnu sarupa as non-eternal. The seventh day festival is for the removal of the seven vidya tattvas kala, niyati, kalai, raga, vidya, purusa and maya; the seven kinds of birth-devas, himan beings, animal, birds, plants and beings that live in water and air. The eighth day festival is important as it is a prayer for the bestowal of eight qualities of the Lord-independence, purify, self-knowledge, omniscience, freedom from malas, omnipotence, benevolence and bliss. The ninth day festival implies the removal of the persistence in three kinds of forms (linga, suksma, stupa), activities (mental, speech, bodily) and places (jagrat, swapna, susupti). The soul is to request on this day for the attainment of state beyond these nine states. The tenth day festival indicates the attainment of liberation, a state of bliss.

During the festivals, the utsavamurti of the presiding deity comes in procession mounting on various vahanas. The various vehicles represent the panchakrtyas. The procession of a vehicle is known as vahana rohana. The procession of the deity placed in a car is called ratharohana. The holy dip of the deity in a tank or river is the Tirthavari.

The karpaka vricha points to the act of sustention. The branches and leaves denote the innumerable number of Jivas. The tree and the roots represent the Lord and the Goddess and the seeds denote the immanent aspect of the Lord. The Surya and Chandra prabhas implies the Vrthi karma.
sthitt. These denote that the Lord bestows the experience to the Jivas being the sun in the day and moon in the night. The Bhuta vahana represents the Vrthkrama samhara aspect of the Lord. This vahana denotes that the Lord operates the body which is constituted of the panchabhuta elements. The Kailasa vahana denotes the state that transcends the activities of mind, speech and body. This also points to the grace of the Lord. Grace is offered even to the wicked if they repent.

The Rishabha vahana represents that the dharma devata persists in the form of nandi even after the samhara to uphold Dharma. The Rishabha’s four legs represent the qualities kshama, vichara, and santosa and sadhu sanghama. By worshipping this white bull one can attain purity. The elephant vahana implies that the extended universe at the time of srsti laya becomes a big mass eka pinda. The Lords mounting on it denotes the Lord’s controlling of the five senses and anava by means of the weapon ankusa implising the grace. The naga vahana denotes the tirobhava (concealment) act. Lord conceals the soul from its inner being like the snake appears with the concealment of its poison and ratna\(^37\).

The palanquin represents Lord Concealment. The Lord appears as a soldier by mounting on the horse vahana and destroys the bonds of the soul. The various parts of the horse represent the spiritual things necessary for welfare. The Kailasa vahana represents the pleasures of the entire universe. Ravana, an embodiment of anava, tries to experience it. This is pointed out by his uplifting the mountain. The arohana of the Lord on it denotes the
control of Lord over anava. The Kamadhenu vahana implies the provision of what it has. Similarly the Lord offers whatever. He has to the souls when it freed from the malas. The lion vehicle denotes the Goddess bestowing grace on those who have deleted the bad qualities and cultivated good qualities.

The car festival denotes the destruction of the three aerial castles. These castles are nothing but the three malas. The Tirthavari festival denotes the Lord’s act of the bestowal of grace and making the impure souls pure. The divine marriage represents the identification of the grace (Sakti) with the knowledge (the Lord). All the souls represent the female and the only male is Lord. The divine marriage is the soul’s union with the Lord. Jivatma unified with Paramatma\textsuperscript{38}. 