

# NAVATHIRUPPATHI TEMPLES

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## Abstract

*Navathirupathi Temples is a set of nine Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu located in Tiruchendur-Tirunelveli route, Tamil Nadu, India in the banks of Thamiraparani river. All these 9 temples are classified as "Divya Desams", the 108 temples of Vishnu revered by the 12 poet saints, or Alvars. The 12 tamil poet saints who lived 2500 years ago. Located around the banks of the River Thamirabarani, the 9 temples of Nava Tirupathi are Thiruvaikundam, Thiruvaragunamangai, Thirupulinkudi, North & South temples of Thirutholaivillimangalam, Thirukkulanthai, Thiruperai, Thirukolur and Thirugurukoor. A popular gathering of pilgrims happens every year at Alwarthirunagari during month of May-June to honour Nammaalvar one of the greatest Hindu mystics. Out of the 108, 105 are in India with 82 in Tamilnadu, 1 is in Nepal while 2 are in the celestial world. It is interesting to note that while the 11 Alvars sung about Vishnu, Madhurakavi Alvar alone sung hymns on Nammalvar his guru. The Nava Tirupathi temples are a part of these 108 Divya desam temples. It is a belief that a devotee who visits the 106 Divya Desam temples fervently will be escorted by Lord Vishnu himself to the other 2 in the celestial world.*

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The Divyadesams are the most revered places to offer worship to Lord Vishnu. Devotees who offer prayers at these temples are believed to attain 'moksha' or liberation from the cycle of birth. As these temples are also the seats of the Navagrahas, people come here to reduce the ill effects of Grahas in their live.

## METHODOLOGY

The researcher planned to employ both primary and secondary data for the present study. Primary data is to be collected from the Archaeological sources, Epigraphical sources, Government Documentary sources and tourists. The required secondary data to be collected from the Madurai Kamarajar University, Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Thoothukudi District library, TTDC (Tamilnadu Tourism Development Corporation) Thesis, Journals books and also from Thoothkudi District Profile.

## SELECTION OF THE STUDY AREA

Thoothukudi District is well known for it's in the history of India's freedom struggle Thoothukudi District enjoys an unique place. Now a days tourism is one among the fast growing Department, generating a considerable income and employment opportunities for the people of Thoothukudi District. It was Veerapandia Kattabomman the Pelingal of Panchalankurichi waged a bitter fight against East India Company, V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, a man of immense courage plunged himself in to the Swadeshi movement and launched the movement of boycott of the British goods and had the guts to take in the British when he launched his Swadeshi steam company. Nobody would forget the fiery Bard Subramaniabharathi who in the history of Tamil Poetry has

left such an indelible memory. Another illustrious freedom fighter from Chidambaram District was Subramania Siva who was a close associate of V.O. Chidambaram Pillai one of the musical trinities Sr. Muthusamy Dikshitar as well as the poet Umarupulavar were born at Ettayapuram in this District. Thoothukudi District is purposively selected for the present research. Being a native of the district the researcher selects Thoothukudi District for the present study.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

1. The main objective of the present study is to provide the necessary knowledge to worship the Nava Thiruppathi Temples in Thoothukudi District.
2. The aim of this work is to make a comprehensive study of the architectural and sculptures of the Nava Thiruppathi temples in Thoothukudi District.
3. The study also endeavours to trace the evolution of the style of the Nava Thiruppathi temples and to establish their chronological sequence.

### **LIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

As the limitations are common to almost all the studies in social survey, the present study is also subject to certain limitations.

1. The primary sources have been collected from the different people visited to pilgrims for nava thiruppathi temples of Thoothukudi District. Most of them are illiterate and belong to different social status, the opinion of respondents can not be categorised under uniform head.
2. The Tabular analysis is used for meaningful conclusion.

### **History of The Nine Temples in Thoothukudi District**

The nine temples of Vishnu on the banks of Tamiraparani are known as Nava Thirupathi temples They are

1. Srivaikuntam, Kallarpiran temple
2. Natham, Thiruvaraguna Mangai temple
3. Thirupuliankudi, Kaasinaventhara temple.
- 4,5. Irettai Tirupathi, Devapiran and Aranvinda Lochanan temples.
6. Perungulam, Maayakoothan temple
7. Thenthiruperai, Nigaril Mugilvannan temple.
8. Thirukolur, Vaithamanithi temple.
9. Alwarthirunagari, Adhinathan temple.

### **1. Sri Vaikundam, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam temple**

Sri Vaikundam Temple is located 29 Kms from Tirunelveli towards Tiruchendur. Many years back, a cowherd in the Pandya kingdom witnessed a strange event on the land where this temple is situated. One of his cows started showering milk at a particular spot. The King was informed who ordered an excavation. The Lord's shrine was discovered and it is around this spot that the sanctum has been built. The present day Gopuram was built by Chanthirakula Pandiyan. The vedic practice is Pancharathram and Tradition followed is Thenkalai. mazing ceremony happens where Perumals from all the 9 shrines upon Garuda, Nammalvar upon Anna and Madhurakavi Alwar upon Parangi Naarkali arrive in a procession.

### **2. Thiruvaragunamangai temple, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam Temple**

Thiruvaragunamangai temple is located 3 KMs east of Sri Vaikundam. The Maha Sambrokshanam was performed on 20th june in 1996. The lord is in a sitting posture. The vedic practice is Vaigasanam and tradition is Thenkalai. The gopuram is very majestic and has 9 tiers. Recently a spring was discovered around the temple which has been renovated now.

### **3. Thirupulinkudi, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam Temple**

Thirupulinkudi Temple is just half a KM towards east of Thiruvaragunamangai temple. The mahasamrokshnam was performed on 15th may in 1996. The deity is also called Boomibalagar. Once upon a time Boomidevi the Earth Goddess got upset with the Lord. The Earth became barren. The lord went and pacified her by telling her she enjoys equal status with Lakshmi.

### **4. Thirukulanthai, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam Temple**

Thirukulanthai Temple is located 5 KMs towards East of Thirupuliyankudi. Mahasambrokshanam was performed on 9th December in 1998. Legend has it that many years ago, The Lord had married a girl called Kamalavathy, daughter of Vedhasaran and Kumuthavalli. One day a demon named Achmasaran abducted Kumuthavalli while she was having a bath and hid her in the Himalayas. The Lord mounted Garuda and went to the Himalayas and rescued the lady.

### **5.& 6. North & South Temple of Errattai Tirupathi, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam Temple**

The Errattai Tirupathi temples can be reached from Thirukulanthai temple via Mangalakurich. The shrines are in a forest along a channel called Vadakaal. The vedic practice is Vaikaasanam and tradition followed is Thenkalai. The puranic lore around South Temple is that a rishi called Athreyasubrabar selected this area for his Yagna. While cleaning the spot, he found a bow and a balance. As soon as he touched them the bow and balance became a man and a woman. They had been cursed into that existence by Kuber. Henceforth the place became known as Thoolaivillimangalam. The highlight of North Temple is that Nammalvar has performed

mangaalasanam for the Thayar at this temple with the Lord. praying here. The vedic practice is Vaikaasanam and tradition followed is Thenkalai.

### **7. Thenthiruperi, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam Temple**

Thenthiruperi temple is located 35 KMs away from Tirunelveli on the Tirunelveli- Triuchendur road, besides the southern banks of Thamirabharani river. The mahasamprokshanam as performed on 16th June in 1999. The original temple is very ancient, predating even Nammalvar. During the 10th century the temple got some additions in the form of a mast, hall and temple car. King Sundara Pandiyan had brought 108 Jaimuni Samaveda Thalavakara from Cholas to perform a prayer in this temple. He was blessed with a child soon afterwards. The Vedic practice followed here is Pancharaathiram while the tradition is Thenkalai.

### **8 . Thirukolur, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam Temple**

Thirukolur is located 5 kms away from Thenthiruperi on the way towards Alwarthirunagari. This is the birth place of Madhurakavi Alvar. There is a legend that a descendant Of Vyasa called Dharmaguptan had lost all his wealth. He was advised by Bharadwaja Muni to come to this temple and perform prayers. The Lord was pleased with his devotion and wealth returned to him. It is said that anyone who has lost wealth can come here and pray with devotion. The Lord always returns the wealth of those who pray with devotion. The Vedic practice followed here is Vaikaasanam while the tradition is Thenkalai.

### **9 . Thirugurukoor, Nava Tirupathi, Divya desam Temple**

Thirugurukoor is located in the famous village of Alwarthitunagari. Tamarind tree is the Sthala vritcham here. Nammalvar was born to the royal couple Kaarimaaran and Vudaiya Nangiyaar. He didnot speak for 16 years. The worried parents took the child to this temple and cradled it to the tamarind tree near the shrine. Nammalvar spoke only when Madhurakavi Alvar met him during his wanderings under the tamarind tree. This tamarind tree is 2000 years old and can still be seen at the temple. It is here at Alwarthirunagari that Nadamuni wrote Divyaprabhandam. Nadamuni sought the Kanni Nunsiruthaambu from descendents of Madhurakavi Alvars. Pleased with his dedication Nammalvar appeared before Nadamuni and helped him with the Divyaprabhandam. The presiding deity of Nammalvar was sculpted by Madurakavi Alvar by a special formulation of boiled water from the River Thamirabharani. No sculptor laid his hands on this deity. In these temples are worshipped as the Navagrahaas themselves : They are,

1. Sooriyan (Sun) - Srivaikuntam
2. Chandran (Moon) – Varagunamangai
3. Angaarakan (Mars) - Thirukolur
4. Budhan (Mercury) – Thirupuliankudi
5. Guru(Jupiter) - Alwarthirunagari

6. Chukran(Venus) - Thenthiruperai
7. Shani(Satum) - Perungulam
8. Raghu, kethu - Irettaithirupathi

### Temples Timings to Worship

The nine temples of Nava Tirupathi can be covered in 1 or 1.5 days depending on the time you wish to spend in each temple. Here is a ready reckoner and guide with Temple timings to plan your trip.

1. Srivaikundam (Surian), Moolavar- Vaikundanathan, Urchavar- Kazhapiyan, Thayar- Vaikundanaayathi Soranathanayahi, Timings-730am-12pm, 5-8pm
2. Srivagunamangal (Chandran), Moolavar- Vijayasanar, Urchavar- Emmlderkadivan, Thayar- Varagunamangal Varagunavalli, Timings- 9am & 6pm
3. Thiruppullyankudi (Puthan), Moolavar- Boomipaalagar, Urchavar- Kaaichina Venthan, Thayar- Nilamagal Malarmahal Pulingudivalli, Timings- 9am & 6pm
4. Erattai Tirupathi (Raagu), Moolavar- Srinivasan, Urchavar- Thevapiran, Thayar- Alemelumagai Padmavathi, Timings- 8am-12 pm & 1-5pm
5. Erattai Tirupathi (Kethu), Moolavar- Arvindalosonar, Urchavar- Chenthamarai Kannan, Thayar- Karunthdankanni, Timings- 8am-12 pm & 1-5pm
6. Thiruzhantai (Sani), Moolavar- Venkadavanan, Urchavar- Maayakoothar, Thayar- Kamalavathi Kulanthaivalli, Timings 730am-12 pm & 5-730 pm
7. Thenthiruperai (Sukran), Moolavar- Maharanedun Kuzhalkaathar, Urchavar- Niharilmukil Vannan, Thayar- Kuzhaikaathuvalli, Timings 730am-12 pm & 5-730 pm
8. Thirukkolloor (Sevvai), Moolavar- Vaithamanidhi, Urchavar- Nichopavithan, Thayar- Kumuthavalli Kolloorvalli, Timings- 730am-12pm & 5-8pm
9. Alwarthirunagari (viyazhan)- Moolavar- Aainathan, Urchavar- Polinthunintrapiran, Thayar- Aadinathanayagi Thirukurukurnayagi, Timings- 730-12pm & 5-8pm

### Festival

The Garuda Sevai utsavam (the Day 5 festival) in the month of Vaikasi (May-Jun) witnesses 9 Garudasevai plus two palaquins one with Namalvar of Alwarthirunagari and the other with Madurakavi Alwar from Thirukalur. A spectacular event in which festival image idols from the nava tirupathis shrines in the area are

brought on Garuda vahana to Alwarthirunagari for Mangalasanam and to give blessing to Nammalvar in the morning.

## Conclusion

An idol of Nammalvar is also brought here on an Anna Vahanam (palanquin) and his paasurams (verses) dedicated to each of these 9 temples are recited. In the night 9 Garuda servai by Navathirupathi Perumals and the two alvars also on procession in circumbulations. Totally 11 temple chapparams move around the outer piraharams. The utsavar of Nammalvar is taken in a palanquin to each of the 9 temples, through the paddy fields in the area. The paasurams(poems) dedicated to each of the 9 Divyadesams are chanted in the respective shrines. This is the most important of the festivals in this area, and it draws thousands of visitors. There are 9 Lord Vishnu temples within 50 kms radius of Tuticorin referred to as Navathirupathi and visited as a circuit. Temples are located on or just off the Tiruchendur – Thirunelveli road.

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