

CHETTIYAPATHU AINDHU VEETU SWAMY TEMPLE: WORSHIP AND FESTIVALS

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Abstract: Worshiping of gods and deities was created by early humans to keep their mind and body well. In Tamil culture, each village and individual families have their own deity called village deity or family deity or 'kaval theivam' in Tamil. Chettiyapathu Aindhu Veetu Swamy is one of the village deities. The temple is worshipped by the people of this locality. There are no vedic practices such as chanting mantras during the poojas. But every morning sangadi music is played. The temple also has some minor deities of some unique importance. The methods of worship and rituals in the Aindhu Veetu are different from the regular or usual practices in Hindu temples. People of all castes may enter the shrine and perform pooja. Another unique practice is the offering of foot wear to the deity Athiswamy. The practice of giving holy ash or 'vibudhi' to the devotees is not followed here. The holy water or the 'theertham' is water with fig and neem leaves. 'Athipanividai' or decorating the God is considered by the people as an important ritual. This paper attempts to bring out the all these unique features in the Aindhu Veetu Swamy Temple.

Index Terms: Chettiyapathu Aindhu Veetu Swamy, Village Deity, Vedic, Rituals, Hindu, Unique, Caste

I. INTRODUCTION

Worshiping gods and deities was created by early human society to keep the mind and body of human beings well. In Tamilnadu each village and each family have their own deity. This deity is called as their 'kaval theivam' or the guarding deity. Chettiyapathu AindhuVeetu Swamy is one such deity.

II. LOCATION

The temple is in Chettiyapathu village near Tiruchendur in Thoothukudi District, Tamilnadu. This temple which is known as Aindhu Veetu Swamy Temple is also known as Thirumani Vaishnava Temple.

III. TEMPLE DEITIES

Sri Periya Perumal, Sri Vayana Perumal, Sri Ananthammal, Sri Aathiswamy, Sri Thirupuli Aalwar and Sri Periya Piratti are the deities in the temple. There are five separate shrines within the temple and so the temple is called Aindhu Veetu Swamy Temple. The people here worship these deities as their village deity and family deities also.

IV. STRUCTURE OF THE TEMPLE

The total area of the temple covers four acres. The temple is surrounded by big walls on the four sides and has two entrances: one on the eastern side and another on the northern side. Devotees enter the temple through the northern entrance. The shrine of Sri Peria Perumal can be seen situated next to the shrine of Sri Vayana Perumal and Anandhammal, followed by the shrine of Sri Adhiswamy and finally shrine of Sri ThirupuliAalwar and Sri Periya Piratti are located.

The temple is important to the people of the area surrounding the temple and they perform simple rituals here. There is no statue for gods or deities other than Sri Peria Swamy. The structure of this temple does not follow 'Agama' rule i.e. the prescribed structure for institutionalized Hindu temples. So, there is no vimana, front mandapam, mahamandapam, andartha mandapam as found in other temples. The people can directly approach the deity and perform poojas themselves i.e. there is no need for the Brahmin priest.

V. POOJAS

The pooja methods of this temple are quite unique. There is no chanting of Sanskrit mantras during the poojas. Only a music is played every three times while poojas are performed. Poojas are performed in the morning (Kaalai Pooja) at 08:00 A.M., after noon (Uchi Kala Pooja) at 12:00 noon, and at night (Raakala Pooja) at 07:00 PM. Every day morning at 04:00 A.M. the Sangadi music and Segandi music are played at this temple. After this, the priest will start his decoration work known as 'Panividai'. Every month special poojas will be held on full moon day (Pournami) and new moon day (Ammavasai) at 09:00 P.M.

VI. PANIVIDAI

According to the norms of this temple it is not easy to complete a panividai. The toughest is the 'Aathi Panividai'. If one may rear a goat as sacrifice for aathipanividai, he should take a lot of care to offer the goat to Aathiswamy temple. The goat should be clean and decorated with flowers. The goat itself goes to the temple before the devotees. It is a grand and rich function. On that day the villagers must invite all their relatives for if leave out any relative or conduct the function in a disdainful manner, the goat will not come to the temple. It would lay down on the way. The main concept of this 'Aathiswamy panividai' is unity in strength. It is an occasion for people to come together forget differences and celebrate. There are other two special panividais namely, 'Macha Panividai' and 'Keerisuttan Panividai'. People perform these panividais if they encounter any obstacle in their life.

VII. FESTIVALS

Here two festivals are celebrated on every 5th on the Tamil months Thai and Chithirai. The Chithirai month festival is meant to honour Arulmigu Periya Piratti, Aathi Swamy and Thirupuli Aalwar. The Thai month festival is meant to honour Vayana Perumal and Ananthammal. Other festival like Thirukarthigai, Amavasai and Pournami are monthly festivals. The festivals celebrated in the temple are slightly different when compared with other temple festivals. The pig sacrifice is the most important of the rituals.

VIII. EXCELLENCE OF THE TEMPLE

Usually in Tamilnadu, the devotees are not allowed to enter the sancum sanctorum of the temples. But in Aindhu Veetu Swamy Temple people all castes can enter the shrine and offer poojas. Devotees offer slippers to Lord Sri Aathiswamy in this temple. The special feature of the temple is that the slugs offered by the devotees are used footwear. Also the animal sacrificed to the deities as Aathi panividai are not forced or dragged to the temple; the animals themselves walk ahead of the devotees to the temple to be sacrificed.

IX. SACRED TREE

The tree considered sacred to the temple i.e. the 'sthala viruksa' is fig tree and the leaves of the tree are considered to possess medicinal qualities. People also offer yellow cloth to praying for blessings such as wedding, child birth and profit in business.

X. PRASADAS

Sweet pongal, milk and garlands are offered as prasadam at the end of the worship, Annadhanam (free meal) is provided in the afternoon in this temple every day. 'Thirumani' has is a very important role in the rituals here. Thirumani is a white stone. Neem leaves and fig leaves are powdered and mixed with water. During pooja the priest places the thirumani on the forehead of devotees praying for protection from evil spirits.

XI. PIG SACRIFICE

Pig sacrifice is very important in this temple. The pig to be sacrificed is placed in front of Sri Peria Swami Shrine. The priest chants the sacrificial prayer into the ear of pig after which the animal is sacrificed. Then they cook and offered the meat food to God. After this a ritual prasadam is provided to the devotees.

XII. POWER OF ATHISWAMY

A village man of Pazhaniyapuram at Tirunelveli district offered a goat to the temple. One day the goat entered the garden of the neighbour. The owner of the garden beat the goat with a big stick. The village people said that the goat had been offered to Aathiswamy for which the owner of the garden had retorted and asked sarcastically whether the goat of Aathiswamy had three horns. On that day the goat grew three horns.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The rituals and practices at the AindhuVeetu Swamy Temple are largely different. People of all castes are allowed to enter the shrine and perform their own poojas. Another unique practice is the offering of foot wear to Aathiswamy. In this temple vibudhi or holy ash is not given to the devotees; instead thirumanikatti is given. The theertham or the holy water of this temple is water mixed with fig and neem leaves. It is a herbal theertham. The Athipanividai or the decorating of the God is considered very important.

XIV. REFERENCE

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