

Festivals In Dhenupurisvarar Temple At Pattisvaram - A Study

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ABSTRACT

Pattiswaram is a medium village, about 8 km south western part of Kumbakonam taluk of Thanavur District, Tamilnadu. During the reign of later chola dynasty, circa 9th cent A.D, this village was part of pazhayarai, the capital. The chola king Rajaraja II who ruled the kingdom from circa 1146 to 1163 A.D, called it after his name as Rajarajapuram. The chola kingdom with pazhayarai as capital was alive for about 450 years. The king Rajaraja II has also erected a Siva temple in the eastern part of pazhayarai.

The presiding deity is known as Thenupureeswar. This massive Siva temple, in its majestic has been withstanding wind and weather in the past nine centuries. The sculptural artefacts of this century-old temple with its crumbling outer walls speak volumes of the art and architecture of the later cholas. The succeeding generations of rulers and rich devotees may have, every now and then or on occasions maintained the temple if not renovated it. The deep-rooted devotion and a desire to maintain the temples and sacred places have not gone off, in spite of a pseudo-rationalistic, iconoclastic and atheistic view. When thousands of devotees, men, women and children thronged not only from the length and breadth of Tamilnadu but also from all over India. The very look of the temple was colourful even at a distance and the gold-plated 'kumba' on the

apex of the temple was resplendent in the morning sun. The archakas, specially brought in, distinctly chanted the vedic slokas on the occasion anointed first and then poured the holy waters of the Ganges on th 'kumba'. Thousands and thousands of devotees all around the temple and even at a distance closed their eyes with folded hands and prayed the almighty Lord Siva.

Keywords: *Pattiswaram, festivals, agama, mantras, neivedyam, upacharas, prodhosam, thithi*

1. Introduction

Like the various religious forms of worship every year on auspicious asertisms and occasions without any deviation, number of festivals is arranged. The festivals reflect the religious bent of mind of the people, their social mingling, their vows etc. They are arranged on basis of the movements of stars and particular asterisms. The auspicious days and times will be fixed earlier according to the almanac. The festivals are arranged on the basis of the Amirtha Paksham or Sukkila Paksham i.e., waning or waxing moon period i.e., on lunar months. Both the Saivites and Vaishnavites give importance to auspicious days and festivals. **Thiruvadhirai** is the asterism auspicious for the savites while **Thiruvonam** is auspicious for Vishnu [1]. During festival days special processions are also arranged. So they should know the facts about the festivals of the Dhenupurisvarar temple. It will be helpful and appropriate to have the festivals arranged during every Tamil month in this temple [2]. As it is an agamic temple rituals and festivals are arranged accordingly.

2. Chitirai

The first day of the Tamil month **Chitirai** is treated as the New Year day and special **pujas** are performed on that day. **Chitra Purnami** i.e., the full moon day of **Chitirai** is a significant one for the people and special **pujas** are arranged and people flock at the temple in large numbers. This popular festival is also a significant one celebrated in a grand manner in this temple.

3. Vaikasi

During this month **Brahmorchavam** is celebrated for ten days. On all the ten days the temple will be decorated and illuminated and special **pujas** too will be arranged. On the **Visakam** day of **Vaikasi**, the **Panchamurthis** are taken out on a procession in their respective mounts to the Thirumalai Rajan River. There they stay for the day and offer their blessings to the devotees. During night they return to the temple in their own mounts.

On the 30th day of the Tamil month **Vaikasi** the celebration of offering of sacred milk to Thirugnanasambandar is carried out in a grand manner. On the next day arrangements are made for offering **Muthu Pandal** (Plate XIX, Fig.35, Plate XX, Fig.35a, Plate XX, Fig.35b) to Manickavasagar. On these two days the temple will be in festive mood [3]. The devotees celebrate this festival in an effective way.

4. Ani

From the very first day of the Tamil month **Ani** the festival associated with Thirugnanasambandar commences. On the first day the offering of **Muthupandal** by Siva to Thirugnanasambandar takes place. This offering is made by the **Bhuhaganas** of Siva. On that day by about 12.00 noon Thirugnanasambandar comes to Pattisvaram from the main shrine of Thirusakthimurram. He sings his **padigams** on Dhenupurisvarar. Then he visits the Thirugnanasambandar Mutt. During that night Thirugnanasambandar is taken out on procession in that **Muthupandal**. He is accompanied by Dhenupurisvarar and Gnanambigai in separate pearl palanquins. This is a rare and popular festival in this temple because the renowned Thirugnanasambandar Tamil scholar and devotee of real merit are venerated by linking him with divine qualities.

In addition to that other festivals are also celebrated in association with Thirugnanasambandar. The gaining of a praise of gold for writing poems at Thirukkodikka is celebrated as a festival. His getting of pearl palanquin, pearl umbrella and other pearl objects at Thirunelvayil Arathurai is also recognised and celebrated. His boating at Thirukkolampudur is also celebrated as a grand festival [4]. Thus the conduct of a festival for the rememberable activities of a devotional Tamil saint and one among the 63 Saiva Nayanmars is a unique form adopted only by this temple. It shows that the Dhenupurisvarar temple introduced a new tradition in the conduct of festivals associating Tamil and Saiva saints. This is a new tradition created in this temple.

5. Adi

Though the 18th of the Tamil month **Aadi** is treated as auspicious, it is treated as a month congenial for commencing agrarian pursuits. So far as this Dhenupurisvarar temple is concerned, it is evident that important festivals are celebrated during that month. On all Sundays, Tuesdays and Fridays special **Abhishekas** and rituals are arranged for the goddess Gnanambigai Amman. The women devotees gather in large number in the temple during Tuesdays and Fridays to witness the celebrations and to gain the grace of the Amman. Art performances also coincide with festivals. The third Friday of that month is quite important. Special rituals are arranged along with fireworks and crackers. The importance assigned to the goddess Gnanambigai suggests the views of the devotees in getting fertility and prosperity by worshipping that deity. This also indicates that all the worships are undertaken purely based on faiths and beliefs [5].

6. Avani

During this Tamil month special **pujas** are arranged for Lord Nataraja. **Vinayaka Chaturthi**, which falls in this month, is celebrated in a fitting manner. Extra **pujas** are arranged for Ganapathy. In this month on the **Sukla Paksham** day i.e., on the day of **Chaturthi** Vinayaka worship in this temple is popular. On the day of **Avani moolam** the processional deity of the primary deity is taken on procession. Special rituals are also conducted.

7. Purattasi

The **Navarathiri** festival is celebrated in an apt way in this temple during this Tamil month. On all the

days special rituals are arranged for Dhenupurisvarar. On the 10th day **Vijayadasami** is celebrated. The Amman is taken out on procession on that day. **Saraswathi Pooja**, which is celebrated by others, is also celebrated here. It is celebrated on the day earlier to **Vijayadasami**. This **Vijayadasami** is celebrated as a day of success and it is believed that everything will be successful when it is commenced on that day. This is also a festival known for its beliefs. Though it is treated as an inauspicious month by the Tamils there are celebrations in this month also and the temple at Pattisvaram is not an exception. It is mainly to keep away from the evil effects.

7. Aippasi

In the Tamil month of **Aippasi**, **Annabhishekam** is celebrated in this temple in an auspicious day. **Skanda Sashti** festival is celebrated with all pomp. The **Surasamharam** (slaying the demon) is executed in a fitting manner. The Shanmughar of this temple is glorified during this month. The above mentioned **Skanda Sashti** will be celebrated in all the Murugan shrines and this temple does not lag behind. Devotees undertake **Sashti** fasting in this temple too continuously for six days. On all the **Sashti** days of every Tamil month special **pujas** are arranged for Lord Shanmugha of this temple [6].

8. Karthigai

During the Tamil month **Karthigai**, the **Somavaram** i.e., Monday is treated as an auspicious one. Special **pujas** are arranged on those days. The **Karthigai** of that month is known as **Thirukarthigai** and is more important. The deity is taken out on procession along with Goddess Gnanambiga. Special **Abhishegas** and rituals are conducted for Lord Subrahmanya. Bonfire is also arranged on that day. On the basis of **Karthigai**, a constellation of six stars (Pleaser) this festival is associated with Karthikeyan i.e., Murugan.

9. Margali

Among the Tamil months **Margali** is treated as a prominent one. **Margali Niradal** i.e., taking bath in the early morning on all days in the month is undertaken by women as a holy measure. They even undertake **Pavai Nonbu**. So importance is assigned to Goddess Ganmbigai during this month. Arrangements are made to sing **Thiuppavai** of Andal and **Thirvembavai** of Manickavasagar. The asterism **Thiruvathirai** is associated with Siva, the cosmic dancer. Special rituals are arranged for

Nataraja on that day. That deity is also taken out on procession. On the new moon day of that month the **Panda moorthy** images are also taken out on procession. They are taken to **Kodi Theertham** and there they offer **Theertham** to the devotees. It is believed that this festival is arranged to remind the devotees of the removal of the sins of Rama. It is also treated as a day in which Rama worshipped Siva [7]. This is a combination of Saiva and Vaishnava principles and also to make the people to give more importance to Siva, the destroyer of evils akin to Vishnu, the protector. Here it must be remembered that Siva is not a destroyer of one and all but only a destroyer of evils. So importance is given to Dhenupurisvarar, the incarnation of Siva. All the rituals associated with Siva in the other Siva temples are carried out effectively in this temple too. In general greater importance is assigned to temple worship during this month. This tradition is adopted in this Dhenupurisvarar temple.

10. Tai

The Tamil month **Tai** is hailed as significant one by the Tamils because the harvest of ripened corns in paddy fields is carried out during this month. On the first day of this month the sweet **Pongal** is cooked by the Tamils because that **Pongal Thirunal** is a Tamil festival day. Special **pujas** are arranged in the temple. The **Tai Poosam** is celebrated on that day of the asterism **Poosam**. On the day of the **Poosam**, **Theertham** is offered to the devotees by Chandrasekharar. It is another belief that those who are born on the asterism **Uddhirattadhi**, if they worship the primary deity they will be blessed with a child. It is also believed that they will get all the graces by the execution of the sacrifice called **Puttira Kameshti yaga** on that day. The entire month is treated as a prosperous one.

11. Masi

The **Sivarathiri** is a significant festival celebrated in this month. It is one of the grand festivals of all the Siva temples. During **Sivarathiri** even during night four times rituals and **pujas** are performed. **Masi magam** is yet another significant festival celebrated during the month **Masi**. On that day in addition to the normal routine **Pujas**, special **pujas** are arranged. The **Krishna Paksha Chathurthi** is celebrated in an attractive way. The decorations made for the deities on that day will be captivating and absorbing.

12. Panguni

Panguni Uddhiram is an important festival during the month of **Panguni**. As rightly pointed out by Sekkilar in his **Periya Puranam** it is believed that all those who are born as human beings should take active part in all the festivals arranged for Lord Siva and the special rituals are arranged for Dhenupurishvara.

13. Conclusion

Thus the festivals are arranged to maintain the sanctity of the temple and also for the upkeep of the

cordial relationship between God and devotees. They also enhance the status and prestige of the temple above all the rituals and festivals, while making the devotees to assemble in the sacred centre called temple, there will be ample scope for unity and solidarity among all people irrespective of the distinctions of caste, colour and creed. The Dhenupurisvarar temple of Pattisvaram also adheres to this traditional form of rituals and festivals. On all the Tamil months as per the stipulated asterisms some festivals or other is arranged in this temple. Such regular conduct of rituals and festivals has made this Siva temple as a popular one.

14. References

- [1] Gandhi Dasan, M., **Tamilagathil Muruga Valipadu**, Ennes Publications, Madurai, 1988, pp.184-185.
- [2] The handbills issued to the devotees by the Temple available in the temple office.
- [3] Interview with S. Ganesa Gurukkal, Priest of the Temple dated on 20 August, 2018.
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- [5] Interview with A.Ganesa Gurukkal, the priest of the Temple dated on 8, August 2018.
- [6] Temple Notice Board 2018.
- [7] Interview with A. Ganesa Gurukkal, Priest of the Temple dated on 8 August 2018.