

Sri  
Srimathe Ramanujaya namaha, srimathe varavaramuniye namaha

Myself Loganathan and srinivasan went to the following divya desams on 31<sup>st</sup> august and 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005. This tour report elaborates our belief on vaishnavism in brief.

### **Thirukoodalur:**

This is a small hamlet, on the way between Kumbakonam and Thiruvaiyaru. It is situated at a distance of 11 kilometers from Thiruvaiyaru and 17 kilo meters from Kumbakonam.

While traveling by bus, alight either at ullikadai or vathiyar veedu (teacher's house) bus stop. It is learnt from the locals, that this place can also be reached from Thanjavur through the Ganapathy Agraharam (a near by place at a distance of 7 kilometers from Thiruvaiyaru) road in a town bus.

The near by railhead is lyampettai station is about 6 kilometers south, but advised to use bus facilities as it is very cheap and to some extent frequent. Here no facilities for boarding and lodging available. It would be better staying at either Kumbakonam or Thiruvaiyaru.

This Sthalam is housed in between lush green fields on north side and river kaveri on south. This shethram is called by 'sangama (sangam – conch) shethram' as the village shape itself looks like a conch, Broad base of houses on the west and narrow sharp nose like area on east. Further, at the base of the tree (Sthala Virutcham, a jamun tree), inside the temple, a shape (projected) looks/ resembles the conch exactly.

Devotees offers, in a banana leaf; a broken coconut with full of ghee and put five thilaks on the periphery, lit the lamp and place it in the rice, surrounded with flowers to thank god for their fulfillment of their grievances. It was really amazing to see such offerings in a divya desam. The water from the tap inside the temple was very sweet like tender coconut water and also crystal clear

The Bhattachariyar who does kaingkaryam to this Perumal normally available only at early mornings and at late evenings, hence planning the trip at these timings will be best to have good dharsan.

The Perumal Moolavar here is called as jagath ratchahan and urchavar is vaiyam katha Perumal. He faces east, standing posture. A sengol is in his hand. Thayar is padmashini and pushpavalli. Also chakrathazwar and poovaraha Perumal were seen on both sides at outer praharam.

A rishi nandagamuni, and all devas together came here to have the darshan of this Perumal, hence the name koodalur.

At this temple I could see the Andal vigraham carved like a queen in a battle yard style. Enquiring I came to know that only rani mangamma had renovated this temple.

Those who plan to visit this divya desam should ask by the name aduthurai Perumal koil, thirukoodalur. Our Thirumangai mannan did mangalasasanam (10 verses 1358 to 1367) to this Perumal

### **Thirukandiyur:**

After worshipping aduthurai Perumal we were waiting at the vathiyar veedu bus stop for 30 minutes, as we could not catch any bus to thiruvaiyaru. Later we boarded a town bus, which was really horrible, he drove in a pathetic slow and rash. He took almost 40 minutes to cross a stretch of 11 kilometers to thiruvaiyavur. At this moment I realized chief minister, miss. J.Jayalalitha's bold action against this erring government servants, finally reached thiruvaiyavur bus stand.

I could see a town bus towards thanjavur and also the crowd was less comparatively, but missing of driver and conductor, also the time was nearing 7 pm, to avoid any closing of thirukandiyur temple, we hired a auto rickshaw. But our bad luck, when we boarded the auto we could see the town bus also moving.

The auto wala took us to the thirukandiyur temple, charged Rs 25/- for two kilometers distance. Thirukandiyur is located between thiruvaiyaru and Thanjavur. It is 2 kilometers from thiruvaiyaru and 9 km from thanjavur. Lot of auto and many private mini buses are available from thiruvaiyaru and of course all buses from thanjavur towards thiruvaiyaru gets halts at this place.

When we entered the temple, the Bhattachariyar was offering evening kala Puja. So we were blessed to see and enjoy the thirumeni of the Perumal in a calm atmosphere. Later bhattar came and shown the aarthi, but I was disappointed as this bhattar neither utter a word nor opened his mouth to praise the lord. This attitude of the bhattar was highly irritating.

The Ursavar is named after 'harasaba vimoshana Perumal' and the Moolavar is kamala Nathan. Standing posture, east facing. Thayar is kamalavalli. Pradakshyam to agasthiyar. After getting dharsan we came out to the outer karuvarai where we could see the charathazwar but could not see Narashimmar as he is located very close to the wall and even no view glass had been placed to view Narashimmar. Desigan and Andal Sannathis are at the outer praharam.

The story goes as when Siva out of jealous cut the head of bramha, the kabalam got struck on his hand, got the sin (sabam), got rid of this by worshipping this Perumal. Near by this temple a separate temple is there for bramha, but now closed due to various reasons, and one temple for Siva also could be seen.

These temples are on the roadside, hence no problem in approaching. Our beloved mangai mannan did mangalasasanam (only one verse 2050) to this Perumal. We came out of this temple and caught a town bus to thanjavur.

### **Thanjai mamani koil:**

The town bus from thirukandiyur charges four rupees, to reach this place. The private bus conductor was very courteous and shown the place in a polite way, also he gave a change for Rs 100/- when we demanded without any hesitation.

This place is at the vennaru riverbank. It is four kilo meters away from thanjavur bus stand. Three temples at a distance of about 200 meters are together considered as one divya desam.

First we went to thanjai ali nagar(big and main temple) where lord narashimma is in sitting posture. This temple replicates the thiruvithangur dooms. Temple was extremely clean and tidy. We went to karuvarai, where a old lady sitting to get her pray informed us that the bhattar is in the manikundram perumal temple. We were silently observing the Narashimmar in sudhai meni, also he was in thaila kappu. Usually thaila kappu will be in the month of karthigai to margazhi(December - January), but it is unusual to see in the aani(September) itself.

To our surprise, the Bhattachariyar came and shown the aarthi and recited the names of all three temples. He clarified our doubt that the thaila kappu will always be at this time, only at this place, further asked us to see the other two perumals also form outside, as he kept only the grilled door closed (main door open).

After offering the pray for the old lady we went to thirumanikundram temple which is just two minutes walk from this temple and had the dharsan standing out from the grilled gate and went to neela mega perumal temple but found this temple main door is kept closed. Through the small hole in the door we could see the dwadasdambam and periya thiruvadi's cemented roof, but got satisfied to see this at this late night.

When we were returning to the main temple, was raining, and caught a bus on the way, thanks to the god who had informed the driver of the bus to stop and pick us. We reached thanjai bus stand. Later went to Mr. Anand's reception and at late night reached the 'valli' lodge arranged by him.

### **Thanjai Prahadeeswarar Temple:**

The next day after attending the marriage by 09:30 hrs we took an auto to go to the thanjai's biggest and world's historic temple "prahadeeswarar temple". The autowala charged Rs 30 to take us from the rail junction and also demanded to pay Rs 150/- so that he will cover all the three main temples (prahadeeswarar, kali Amman and punnai nallore mari amman temple) in and around thanjavur, but reluctantly, we said no, and entered in the main prahadeeswarar temple.

Since the time was only 09:30 we could not see much tourist crowd around the temple. On the right side, while entering, a board had displayed the sign for leaving our shoes. Leaving the shoes at free of cost with a token in hand we were watching a couple passing us and learnt that they also from the wedding hall.

The maha gopuram was slightly ash and pinkred in color, but I read it was built with blue metals in the base and lime base mortar was used for sculptures. The reason for the pink red was due to latest chemical coating applied by the geological department to avoid erosion by the wind and natural ways.

The second gopuram was slightly lower in height and passing through the jute carpet wetted with water to avoid heat, we could reach the maha nandiemperuman. The majestic nandi is one of the biggest in south India. On the pradosam day, the 12<sup>th</sup> day after new / full moon day, about 5000 people assemble to see the palabishekam (milk bath). The day we were there happened to be a pradosam too, but as we planned to go to tirchy to have the dharsan of

rangan we hesitatingly, went around the temple and had the dharsan of prahadeeswarar.

The Moolavar prahadeeswarar is a big lingam and the base avudaiyar is also gigantic in circle. The priests explained about the then kings' rituals and the ground ways between palace and the temple.

After that we went around the temple to see ganesh and murugan on each backside of the Moolavar, sandikesavar in the left middle side and in the front left side Thayar Sannathi, took the shoes and came out to go to the bus stand.

### **Punnai nallore mari amman koil amman koil:**

While passing out, an autowala approached and demanded again Rs 25/- to take us to the bus stand, which is about one km away. We avoided him, but to our surprise another autowala came and asked to give Rs 15/-, the way he asked (very polite) made us to enter in his auto. Actually we were planning to go to tiruchy after reaching the bus stand, but the autowala described about the punnai nallore mari Amman koil.

Lighting the auto, he showed us the town bus to go to mari Amman temple, without any saying, we get into the bus and reached the temple which is about 6 kilometers from the bus stand.

This temple was built by the then thanjai king also replicates thiruvudangur style dooms. As the crowd was heavy in the free dharsan, with slight hesitation we asked the priest about the special dharsan, he immediately asked to pay Rs 5/- each. I am sure that this money would have definitely gone into his pocket, but as we have to go to trichy, we have no other option and paid the same and had the dharsan immediately, while coming out a board displayed about the ramar temple back side of this temple.

### **Ramar temple:**

We walked up to this temple, as it is 200 meters away. This place is inside the village. The maha gopuram was seems not painted for a long time, we left our shoes outside and praying at the dwadasthambam entered inside the temple, the Bhattachariyar here was kind enough to show all the vigrahams and also explained in a ritualistic way as done in a divya desam. It gave us immense pleasure and came to see the Hayagirivar temple straight opposite to the maha gopuram. It is learnt that the house meant for chariot was later converted as this temple, hence located at a high altitude. After the worship, we return to mari Amman temple complex to board the bus to reach the mofussil bus stand to tiruchy.

Immediately after arriving at the mofussil bus stand we could board a bus to trichy. We got good seats in the bus. It was about one and half an hour journey to tiruchy. We utilized this time to take rest, as we were sleepless last night. The refreshment was very useful in our further journey.

At 01:15 we reached trichy and immediately upon arrival we straight went to junction to search for any accommodation availability for the night return journey, but we were disappointed as almost all trains were waitlisted. With

weight heart we came back to the main road and availed our midday meals in a hotel. The food was not at all up to the mark of trichy food. As we were hungry, some stuff gone inside to quench our hungry.

### **Srirangam temple:**

By 02:00 pm we could catch a bus to srirangam and reached with in half an hour time. We entered the south side maha gopuram, which is 236 feet height, in 1987; the 44<sup>th</sup> jeer took initiative to finish this gopuram, which was left unfinished (mottai gopuram). Almost all, except madura kavi Azwhar did mangalasasanam for this perumal (247 verses in total). It is not possible for me to describe about this shethram, as I am little known. It is learnt that lifco had made a separate edition about this Sthalam elaborately. Those interested may go through that.

By a slow walk, we reached third praharam and left our shoes at the place arranged by the temple management. As we were slightly tired/sleepy after the meal (unda mayakkam), we also took rest at the ranga mahal, where many bhakthas along with the regular beggers taking rest.

After a while we entered the main sanctum sanctorum as that time was for free dharsan, there was absolutely no tourist crowd, we could see the entire thirumeni of our beloved ranganathan and got immense pleasure. We were at the karuvarai for five minutes and came out. While coming out we saw one bhagavatha looking the gopuram and praying, on enquiring we were informed the golden finished para vasudevan is in the standing posture. We also worshipped and went around to see the paramapatha vassal at the backside of the sanctum sanctorum.

Now we went to Thayar Sannathi, enroute we saw the five-hole Laksmi Narayana temple (lanthu kuzhi). We also tried putting our right five fingers on the holes and bent our hip to see the paramapatha vassal as was seen by the Thayar. But we could not bend our hip, as the distance is more, and proceeded to Thayar Sannathi.

At the Thayar Sannathi, we could do archanna, had a good dharsan and came out to the outer praharam where many garlanders were plighting garlands with decorative flowers. We sat for a while there and came out.

We were informed by one other bhagavatha, that the mandapam straight opposite to the Thayar Sannathi, where kambar pronounced kambaramayanam. At that instance, when one point of pronounce, there was a dispute between kambar and among the audience, but later this was approved in favour of kambar by a big sound from the mettu alagiya singar (Narashimmar).

We went up, to have a dharsan of this mettu alagiya singer too. Then went to see the thousand pillar mandapam, but it was kept closed, enroute we could see ramar, srinivasan temples. At ramar Sannathi the bhattar was very eager to take care of the devotees, he was not waiting for the bhakavadas to come near the priest, he goes to the bhakavadas, this attitude really pleasant.

Going round, we came to the place where we left our bags, collected it and went to the chakkarathazwar temple. Had good dharsan and came out and really got tired. It took two full hours for us to go round the entire temple. Again at ranga villas mahal, for some time we took rest, consulted with a old deaf

bhagavatha the way to vellarai, he first took his ear tone apparatus and answered, had the old man advise, came out of the complex, took our shoes, had a coffee on the way to bus stop, The coffee also not up to the mark, and proceeded to go to thiruvellarai divya desam.

### **Thiruvellarai:**

We boarded a bus to go to the chatram bus stand to proceed to thiruvellarai. First, the bus driver, informed us, to get down at mambala saali, but with hesitation we proceed to chatram bus stand. As we were going to thiruvellarai, which is about 20km from chattaram bus stand, we envisaged that no seats could be available if we get board at mambala Salai.

At chatram bus stand, we alight, tried to catch thuraiyur moffusil private bus, which was on slow motion, but that conductor refused to admit us and said it will not ply to vellarai and showed us a government bus, with in minutes we came to know that there was a dispute between the two buses.

We finally board the government bus and got seats in the last row. To avoid any confusion at the last minute, we confirmed with the co-passengers about stopping of the bus at thiruvellarai. The village men enthusiastically told definitely will stop. On assuring we sat comfortably (so called) at the last seat.

With in minutes a bhagavatha with a thiruman on his forehead got in to the bus and sat in our front seat. On seeing his thiruman, we enquired about thiruvellarai Sthalam, he nodded his head. He asked the conductor to give ticket to thiruvellarai, so we were happy that we can discuss about the Sthalam on the bus with that bhagavatha, but we were disappointed, he was tight lipped.

At the junction of the main road to thiruvellarai, the village man asked us to get down. Along with us the same thiruman bhagavada also got alighted, but without any sign of our presence he straightaway walked in to a saloon. This attitude really made us to scold him. Finally when we returned from the temple we could see him going in to the temple. This again aggravated our earlier anger with him.

At the junction we asked a (cycle hiring) shop wala about the temple, he said it is about half a kilometer from here and one bus will come at 07:30 pm and the same will return immediately from the said Sthalam thiruvellarai.

We asked the shopwala to rent two cycles to go to the temple, without any hesitation and doubting us he gave two, one for each. Left our bags at the shop and proceeded to the temple.

This temple is at a distance of 600 meters away from the main junction at a elevated place. We parked our cycles and left our shoes, climbed the steps. The main gopuram is not yet finished (mottai gopuram), but the parapet walls are high. The temple was extremely clean.

When we entered the main gopuram, which is facing north, we could hear drum sound indicating the evening kala Puja, actually the main entrance is facing east. Slowly we walked in and at the kodi maram worshipped, and went inside the temple.

There are two entrances climbing still high, the two represents the utharayanam and dhaksnayanam, as it is only September, only dhaksnayanam

entrance was kept open, whereas utharayanam entrance was kept closed, and learnt going through the utharayanam entrance leads to moksham. We were unblest. Upon reaching the karuvarai, we could see many bhakavadas were doing khosti ganam. As there was special Puja by a local devotee, the khosti were present at that time, we were some how blessed to hear the same. After the same we were offered theertham, appam and chakkarai pongal.

After all the khosti went down, we went to have the dharsan of pundarikatchan, the main deity at this temple, the Ursavar is senthamarai kannan. The main deity is sudhai meni in thaila kappu. Here the belief that the sun and moon are fanning( samaram) to the main deity and sridevi, bhoodevi and adi seshan are serving in human form. Here we could see the chakkaram on his right hand is in vertical shape rather than horizontal. The Bhattachariyar explained in a nice way and did archanna for us. While coming down at the dhaksnayana entrance, we could notice a sculpture painted brightly where in a lady is sitting, on her lap god is just sitting. The bhattar coming along with us could not explain this clearly.

We came out of the main deity, noticed at the main entrance “nazhi kettan vassal “ written on the top. The story goes as when Bhagavan came one night late and Thayar was asking why late? Hence the slogan.

We went Thayar senbaghavalli / pangaja valli Sannathi and also to chakkarthazwar Sannathi. It is learnt that here there are seven pushkaranis, one pond was with full of water.

Here sibi chakravarti got pradakshyam , Bhagavan gave dharsan in swetha varaha roopam. Hence the name vellarai. This is one version, and the other version is vella means white and arai means rock. Periazwar and Thirumangai did mangalasasanam here. Totally 24 verses.

We came down and took our cycles, returned to the junction, left our cycles, had a very good tea at the road side shop. While having tea one call taxi wala approached us and dropped us at utthmar koil on his enroute to srirangam, took only Rs 20/ from us. Really at that time we were expecting a bus as seenu was highly suffering from head and body pain, god really sent him.

#### **Thirukarambanoor( uthamar koil):**

The call taxi driver dropped us at the fly over, which is meant for railway crossing. The uthamar koil railway station is back side of the temple is about just one kilometer from srirangam station. We proceed to the temple. The day was Thursday and also special day with pradosam coincides. Hence there was a heavy crowd there. Since this temple is housed with three murthis Siva, Vishnu and bramma, all the devotees thronged there at the same time.

We got special entrance ticket Rs 5/- and went to the karuvarai, where we could see purushothaman in pujanka sayana thirukolam. Here at this temple we could notice that bhakthas enters karuvarai on both sides of the median kept there and returns through the center passage. It was seems to be conducive for all to have good dharsan by this arrangement.

The story is same as that of thirukandiyur divya desam. The locals call this Sthalam as mumurthy temple. Then we went around Siva and bramma Sthalam. The Sthala Virutcham is banana plant (kathali Virutcham).

Our mangai mannan only did Mangalasasanam here. Only one verse. Then we catch a bus to chatram bus stand, where seenu had his favourite medicines for his headache and catch another bus to natchiyar koil.

### **Thirukozhi :**

From chatram bus stand many buses are available to thirukozhi. The locals do not know by the name thirukozhi, so ask by the name either natchiyar koil or by uraiyur. (Not thuraiyur). Also from the central trichy junction it is just 3 kilometers away.

We got down at this place and rushed to the temple as it was 08:30 PM. We were very unfortunate that the temple was already closed. We asked the bhattar to allow going round the temple once. We saw a separate Sannathi for thirupan Azwhar, happened to be his birthplace and came out of the temple. Upon coming out, the bhattar informed us, the Perumal, azaghiya manavalan is very beautiful to kindle our thirsty further. Anyway, we may be blessed to have his dharsan in near future. This perumal also called as kattu singer and the one in srirangam is mettu singer.

Then we went to nearby vekkali amman temple. Finally reached the central bus depot. Had our night meal and returned to Chennai.

Srimathe Ramanujaya Namaha, Srimathe Varavaramuniye Namaha  
Subam