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TOUR GUIDE

Kanchipuram

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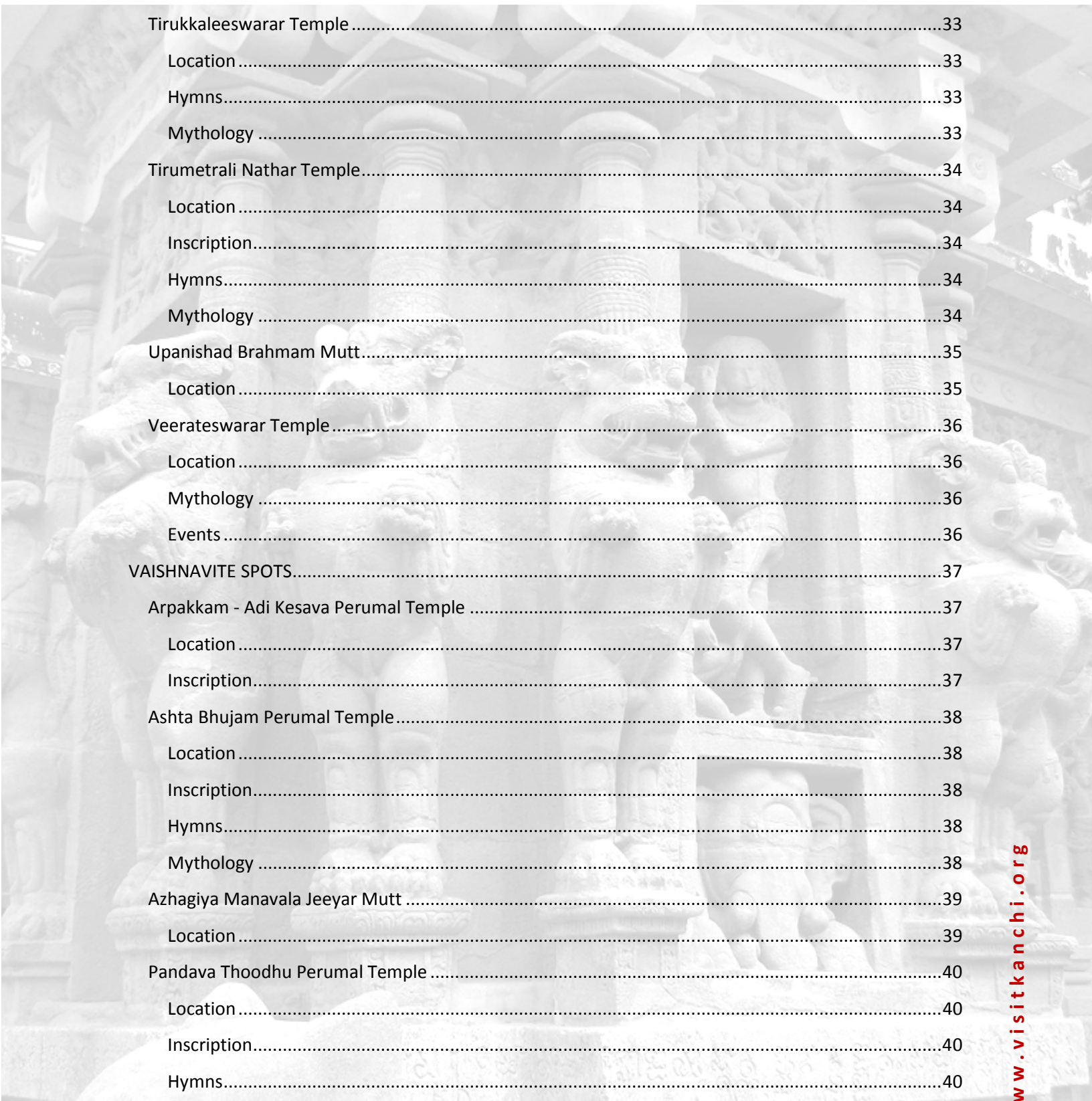
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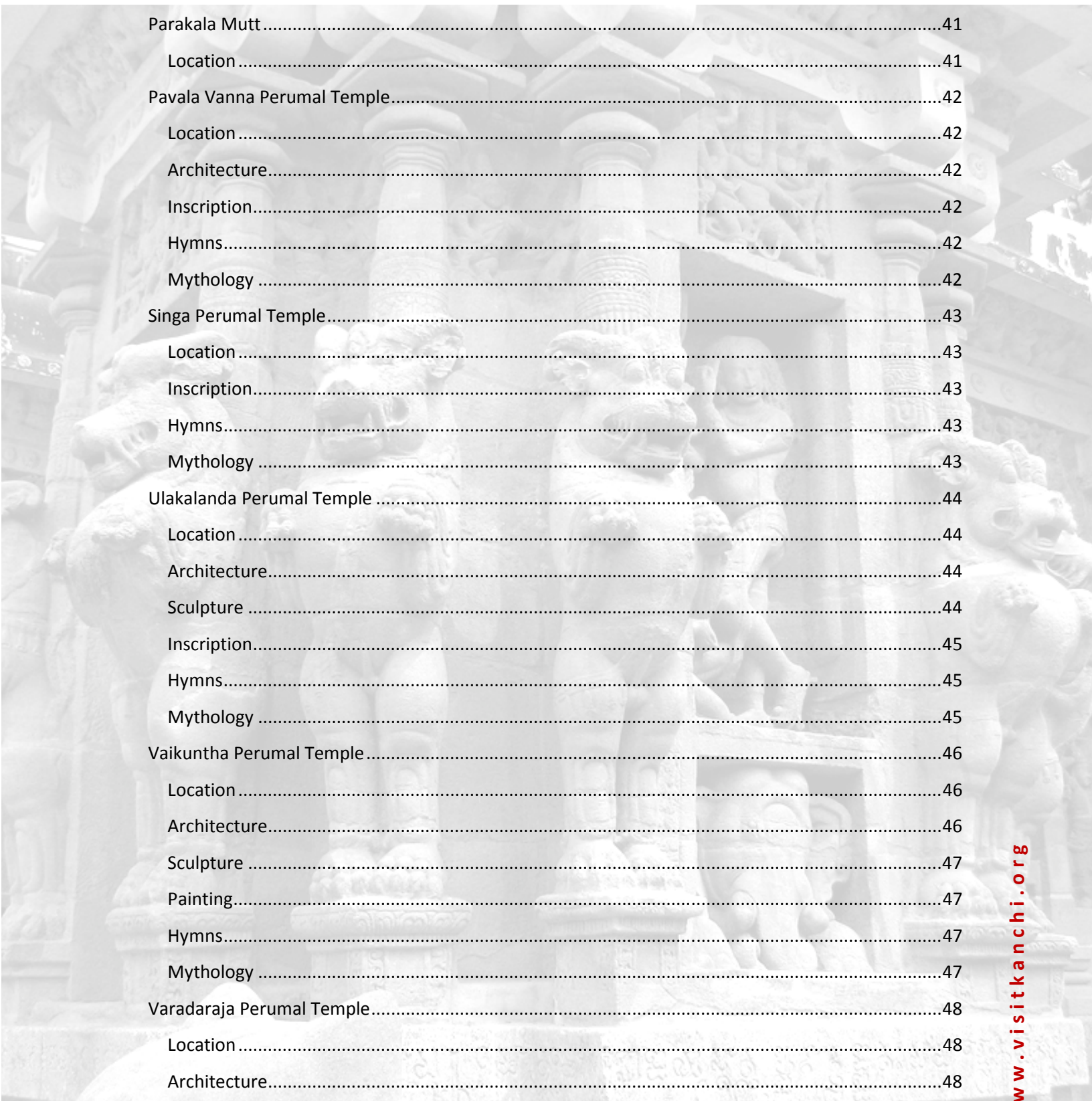
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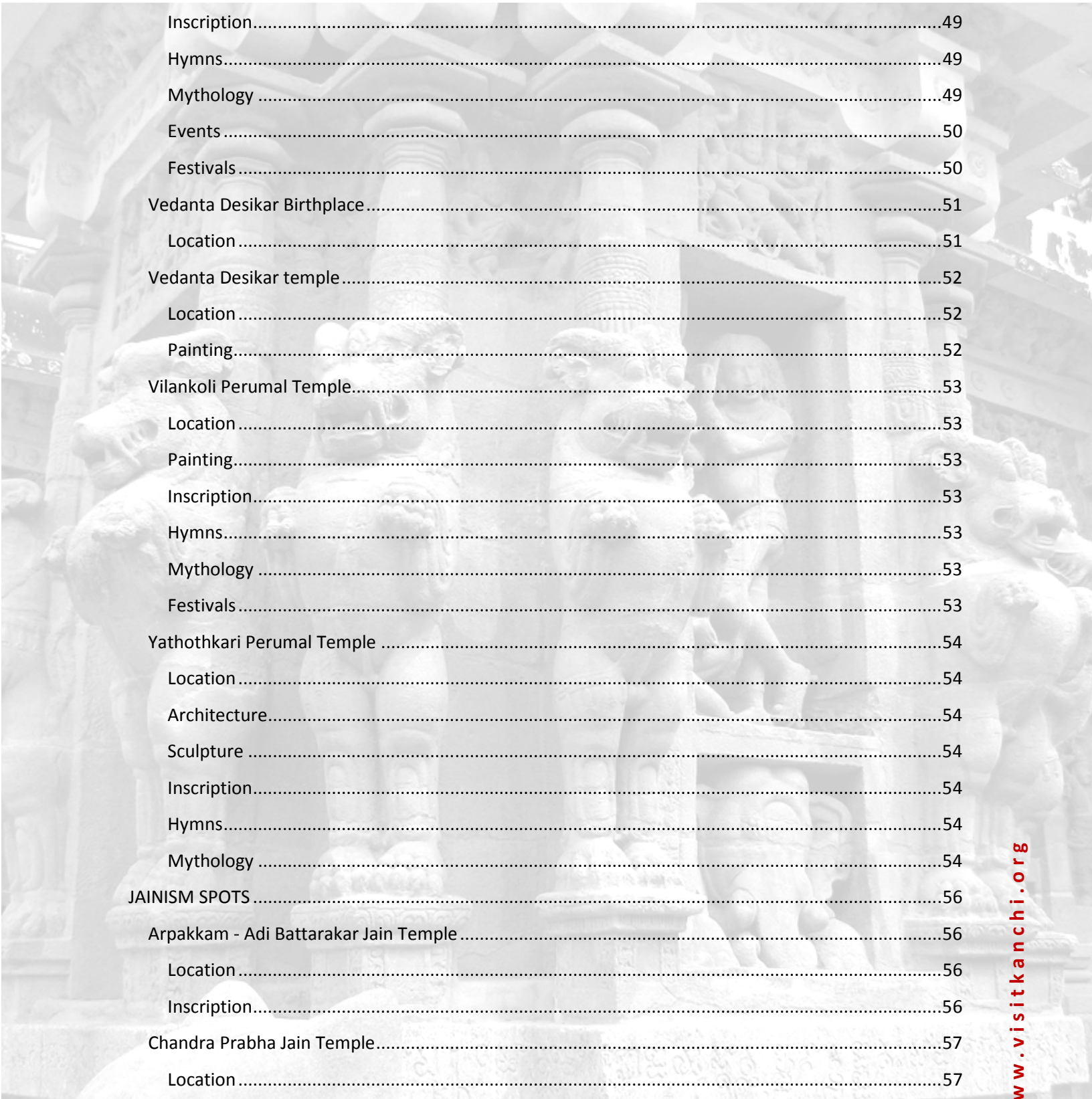
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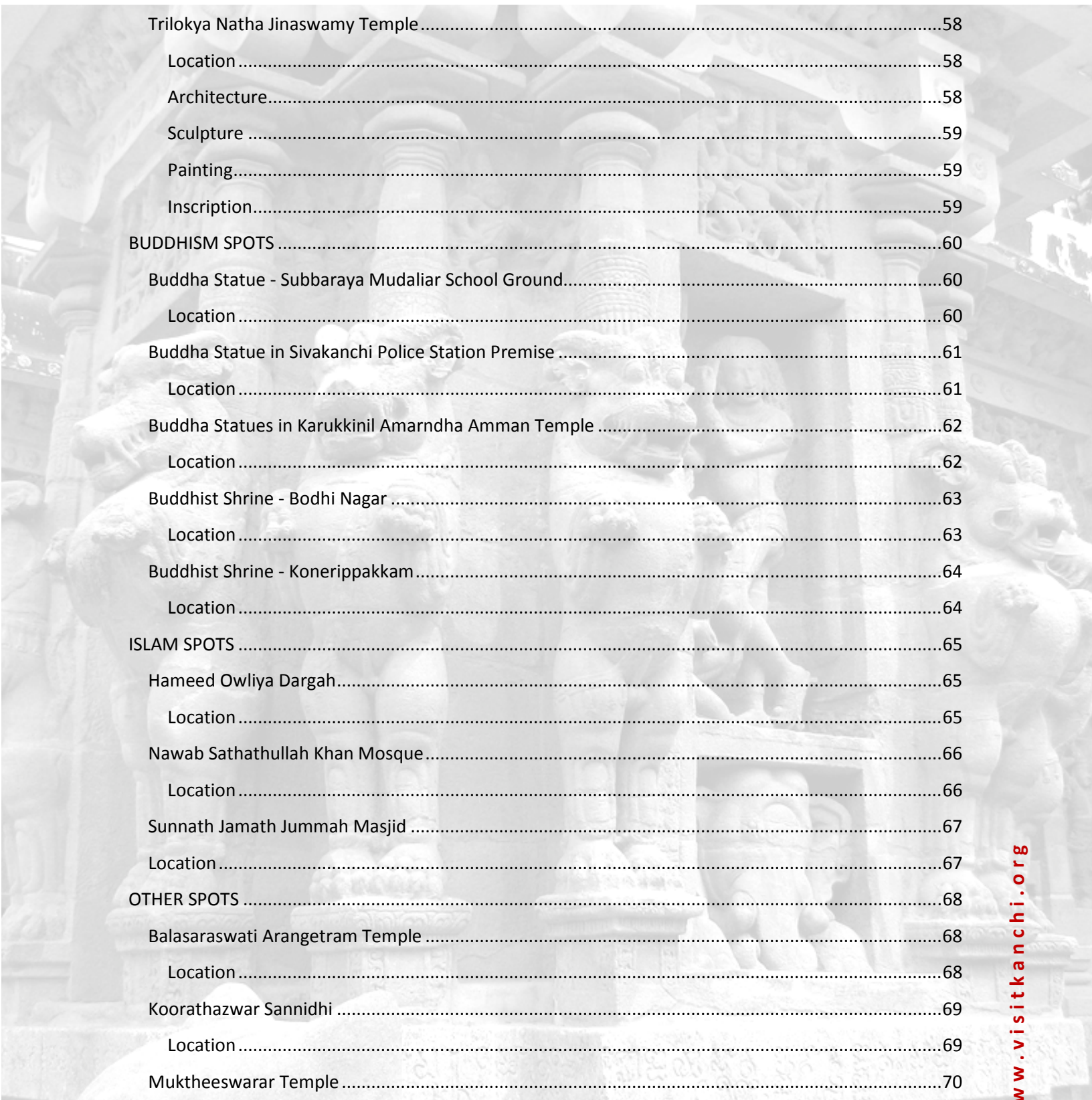
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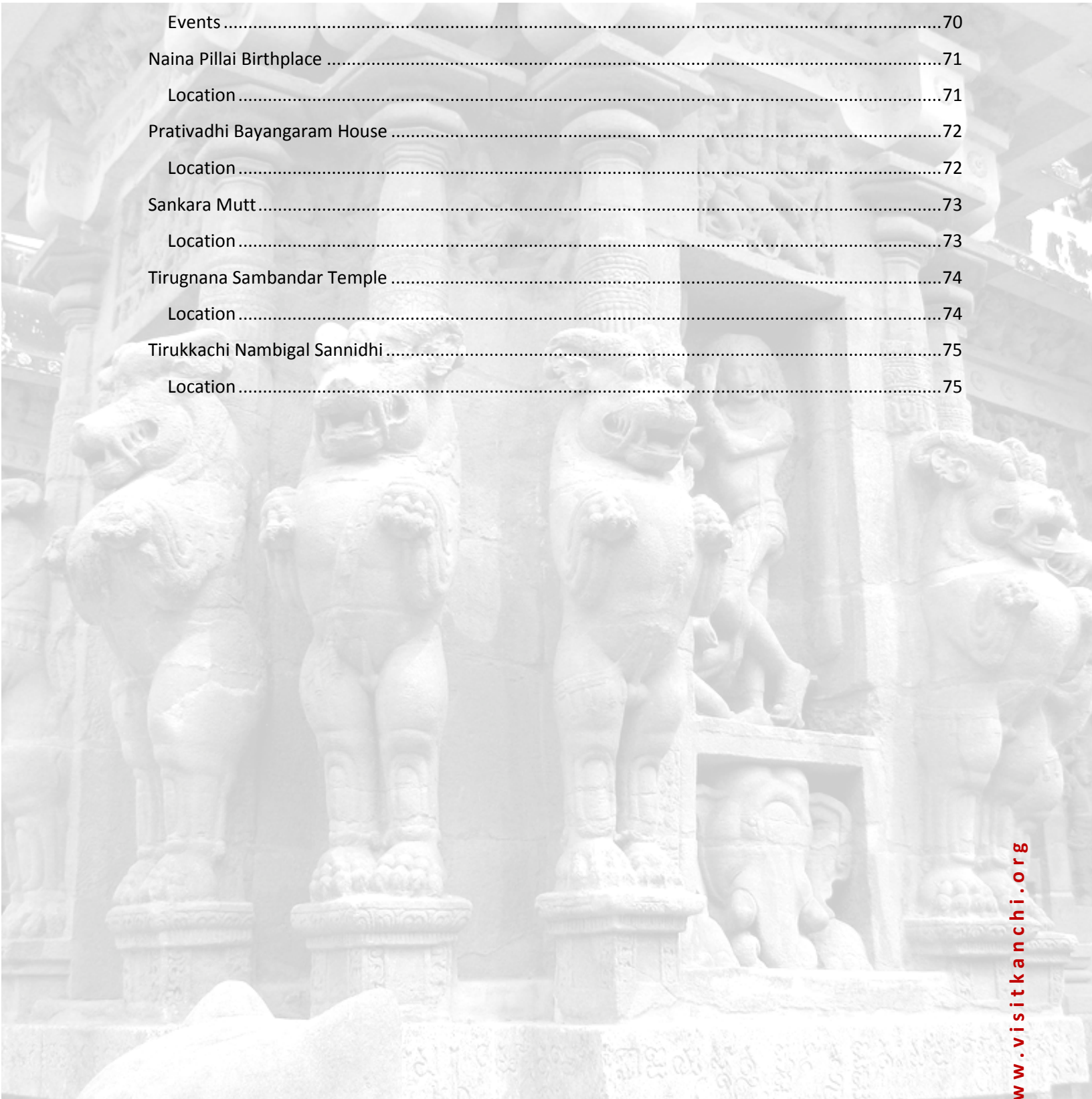
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SAIVITE SPOTS

Airavateswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Airavateswarar

Built By: Narasimha Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Category: Temple

This small temple can be hardly noticed opposite to the Kachapeswarar temple. Except for a small pathway it is fully locked on all sides by new constructions. It is in a near dilapidated condition. Apart from all these shortcomings this small Pallava monument deserves attention for its beauty.

Location

Opposite to Kachapeswarar temple, near the SSKV Girls Higher Secondary School.

Architecture

If we proceed inside through the front gate, the sanctum sanctorum with Mandapam>Ardha Mandapam can be seen. This Mandapam has lion figured pillars. Jumping lions can be seen at the outer pilasters.

Sculpture

At the entrance of the Mandapam,Ardha Mandapam the sculptures of Dwarabalakas are visible. The jumping lions are distinct and somebody riding on them. On the outer walls, the divine figures of Mahishasura Mardhini, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in Urdhva Thandava posture have been exquisitely carved out.

Mythology

Indra's elephant worshipped God Shiva in this temple. Indra was the Lord of the Devas in heaven. When the milky sea was churned by the celestials on one side and by the demons on the other side a divine white elephant appeared. This divine white elephant worshipped the God Shiva in this temple and received a boon which empowered the elephant to carry the great celestial Indra on his back.



Aneka Thangapada Eswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Aneka Thangapada Eswarar

Built By: Kulothungan I

Period: 11th Century

Sanctified By: Sundarar

Category: Temple

This temple situated along the path of the famous Kailasa Nathar is one of the five shrines sanctified by the Devaram hymns. In the quiet premises of this temple, the legendary Carnatic music singer, great Naina Pillai was given initial training in his youth by an unknown Yogi about the intricacies of Tala aspects. Until his last days Naina Pillai used to come here for performing Sadhakam - practice.

Location

Near the SSKV Boys Higher Secondary School. Inside a by lane on the right side of the path proceeding to the Kailasa Nathar temple.

Inscription

Inscriptions have been found in the north, south and western bases of this temple. They all issued during the reign of Kulothunga I. It is interesting to note that this king took much care to donate lands to this temple neglecting the nearby architectural marvel, Kailasa Nathar temple. He even diverted the lands surrounding Kailasa Nathar temple for the benefit of Aneka Thangapadam.

Hymns

Saint Sundarar has sung in praise of the deity of this temple. He extols this temple as a place much liked and preferred by God Shiva himself. Further he says that those who praise the God of this temple will live a long life without any fear of Yama.

Mythology

'Anekatham' means elephant. 'Kavatham' means garden. Here the elephant faced god Vinayakar installed the Shiva Lingam bearing his own name and called it 'Anekabechuran'. In this form he praised God Shiva. Much pleased by his devotion, Shiva appeared before him and told that he had to go Iraniyapuram and destroy the demons Kesi and others. He also had to separate the power called 'Vallabhai' from their bodies and marry it. After this Vinayakar can have the powers to protect his own devotees. God Vinayakar did so and protects his devotees and their good deeds without any hindrance.



Arpakkam - Tiruvaleeswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Valeeswarar

Period: 12th Century

Category: Temple

This is a Chola period temple. Earlier, it was named as 'Kailasamudaya Nayanar Temple'. Now it is famously called as Valeeswarar Temple.

Location

Arpakkam village is at a distance of 15 kms to south of Kanchipuram. One has to take the eastern route (locally called as 'Keel road') to Uttiramerur from Kanchipuram. By car, this village can be reached within 15 to 20 minutes of travel. After reaching the Arpakkam junction (called Arpakkam Mandapam), one has to take left to enter into the village. Road conditions are good.

Inscription

The temple has an interesting inscription pertaining to Chola period. It belongs to the 5th regnal year (1168 AD) of King Rajadhi Rajan II. It refers to a significant historical event occurred in Tamil Nadu. King Kulothunga I - the great grandfather of Rajadhi Rajan II conquered the Pandya Kingdom and brought it under the control of mighty Cholas. Anyhow the Pandya kings loyal to Cholas were allowed to rule their country. But after Kulothunga I, Cholas lost control over the Pandyas.

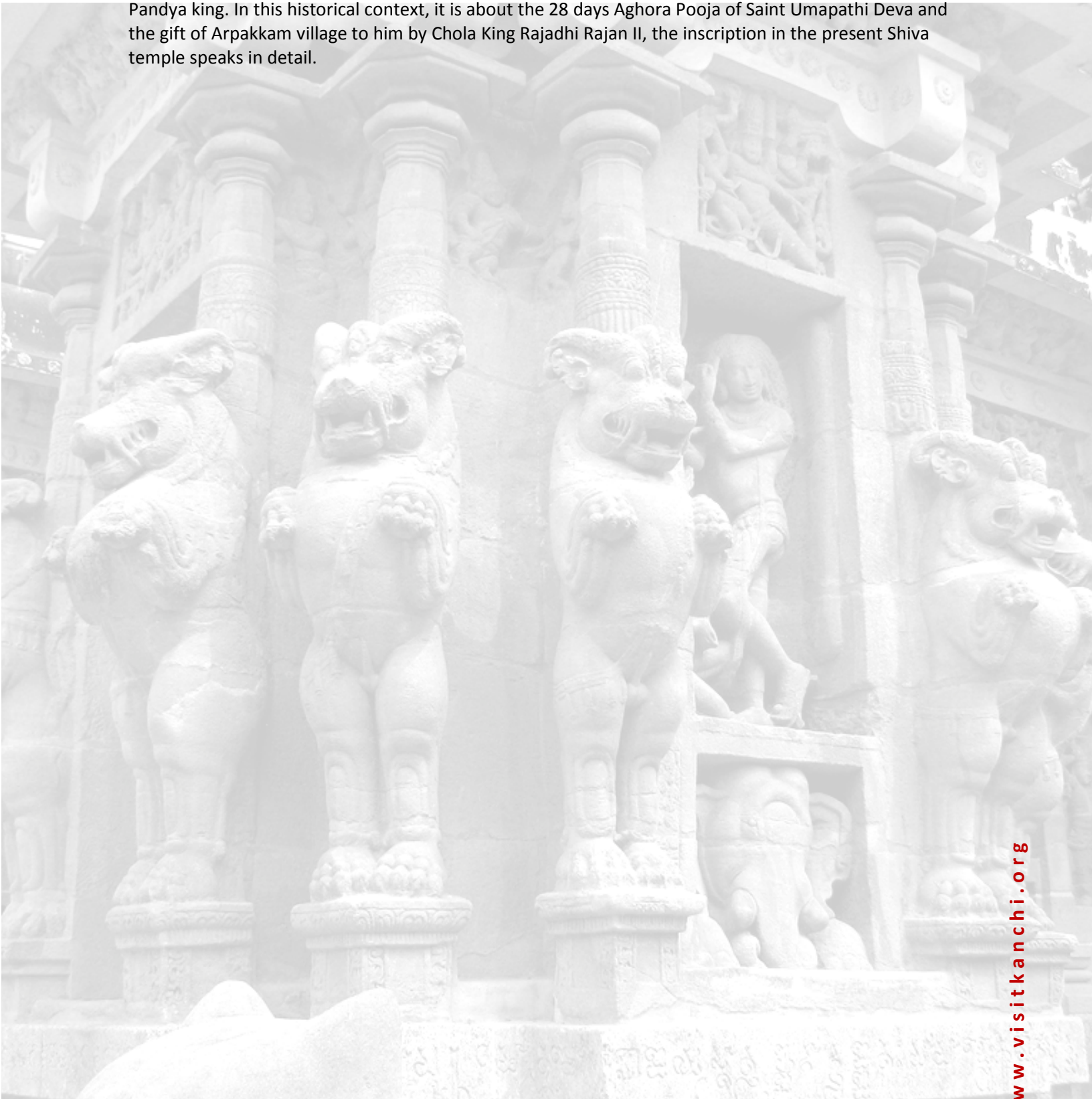
About 1166 AD, internal feud arose between Pandya kings Parakrama and Kulasekara. As Kulasekara attacked Madurai, Parakrama Pandya appealed to Sri Lankan King Parakrama Bahu to help him. Before the Lankan help could reach Parakrama, Kulasekara took Madurai and killed Parakrama, his wife and some of his children. But the Lankan King instructed his generals to continue the war until Kulasekara is defeated and the Pandya throne was bestowed upon Virapandya - son of Parakrama Pandya who escaped the massacre. Kulasekara appealed to Chola King Rajadhiraja II for help who sent a large force to his aid. But Kulasekara lost his fight against the Lankan forces. The Lankans successfully installed Virapandya on the throne. Now the Cholas and the Lankans entered into direct conflict. Initially the Lankan forces were successful and occupied some of the southern border areas of Chola Kingdom. To counter the threat posed by Lankans, Rajadhi Raja II approached the Saivite Saint Umapathi Deva - who hailed from Bengal region – for moral support. At the request of the King, the Saint performed 'Aghora Pooja' (hardcore rituals) continuously for 28 days.

After this was over, the Chola general Annan Pallava Rayan led the Chola forces against the Lankans. Tough fight ensued. In the end, Lankans were defeated and their generals Lankapuri Dandanayaka and Jagathvisaya Dandanayaka were beheaded. Without opposition Kulasekara Pandya ascended throne. Rajadhi Rajan II gifted the village of Arpakkam in Thondai Mandalam to Saint Umapathi Deva for his religious service to defeat the Lankans. But Lankan King Parakrama Bahu did not give in. He prepared a big counter offensive against the Cholas. On hearing this, the Cholas induced Srivallabha - a rival of Parakramabahu in Lanka - to make his claim for the throne.

To his support the naval forces of Cholas landed in Lanka and attacked and destroyed many places. Sensing defeat in his own country, Parakramabahu at last recognized Kulasekara as the rightful king of the Pandyas, and entered in to an alliance with him against the Cholas. Knowing the treachery of



Kulasekara, the Cholas drove him away from throne and at last installed Virapandya as the rightful Pandya king. In this historical context, it is about the 28 days Aghora Pooja of Saint Umapathi Deva and the gift of Arpakkam village to him by Chola King Rajadhi Rajan II, the inscription in the present Shiva temple speaks in detail.



Ekambara Nathar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Timing: 6 AM to 12 PM; 4 PM to 8 PM

Deity: God - Ekambara Nathar; Goddess - Yelavarkuzhali

Built By: Mahendra Varman I

Period: 7th Century

Category: Temple

Location

This temple is situated in the north western part of Kanchipuram town. From the town bus stand it is at a distance of one kilometre.

Architecture

The temple is situated in a big campus of 23 acres. It has a 192 feet great Rajagopuram in its southern entrance, 5 grand Prakarams, 100 and 1000 pillared Mandapams. Mahendra Varman I first built this temple as a brick stone structure with a black granite Mandapam in its front. The pillars of this ancient Mandapam are now kept in the State government museum in Chennai. After the Pallavas, the Cholas constructed a fully fledged granite structure with 100 pillared Mandapam and Prakarams. Near the Kodikkambam, a west facing Sannidhi can be seen. It is called 'Kacchi Mayanam'. It has been raised in the style of Cholas. One little temple belonging to Pallava period can be seen near the western bank of temple tank called Sivagangai Theertham.

The Vijayanagar rulers built the 1000 pillared Mandapam and outer Prakarams. Even though the huge Mandapam is called as '1000 - pillared', at present only 616 of them survive. The Vijayanagar King Krishna Devaraya built the massive 192 feet, 9 storeyed Rajagopuram in 1509 AD. The figures of the King and that of his consort can be seen in the Gopuram. The Sanctum Sanctorum and Prakarams built by the Cholas were reconstructed in Nagarathar style during the early 19th Century.

Sculpture

There is a Mandapam like structure near the western bank of the temple tank Sivagangai Thirtham, where the temple office functions at present. In the bottom part of all three sides of its wall, sculptures can be seen. These sculptures depict the story of Saint Siruthonda Nayanar cooking food for a devotee of God Shiva out of his own child's meat. The Kacchi Mayanam Sannidhi also has sculptures belonging to the Chola period.

Painting

In the Vidhanam of the 1000 pillared Mandapam we can see the Vijayanagar period paintings. In the northern side of the Prakaram also painting works have been done. According to the pattern followed during that period, yellow, black and saffron colors were used. In the Mandapam where temple elephants are tied, we can see the Nayaka period paintings. Actually these are overdone on the Vijayanagar period paintings.



Inscription

A few columns bearing the inscriptions of Mahendra Varman I were found near the 1000 pillared Mandapam. They are now kept at the entrance of the State government museum in Chennai. Many other epigraphs in this temple have recorded the donations made by Chola, Telugu Chola and Vijayanagar kings.

Hymns

This temple is sanctified by the hymns of Saints Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Manikkavasagar. Saint Appar has sanctified the Kacchi Mayanam Sannidhi of this temple.

Mythology

(1) In the Kailash, once Goddess Parvati covered the eyes of God Shiva in a joyous mood. But Shiva got angry and told Parvati to leave the Kailash at once. Parvati came down to earth and chose the banks of Kambai river in Kanchi to stay. There she made Shiva Lingam out of sand and started praying it. To test the perseverance of Parvati, Shiva made floods in Kambai river which tended to wash away the sand Lingam. Parvati embraced the Lingam to save it. Due to this, Shiva melted down and brought back Parvati again to Kailash. The sand Lingam then hardened into a solid structure. It is believed that the Shiva Lingam bears the marks of Parvati's embracing.

(2) The holy marriage between God Shiva and Goddess Parvati once occurred in Kailash. All the Gods and Sages went to the Himalayas to see the marriage. Due to this, the northern side started to tilt downwards. To equalise the earth's weight between north and south directions, God Shiva told Sage Agasthya to go southwards. But the Sage was saddened that he could not see the marriage. Seeing this, Shiva assured Agasthya that he will once again marry Parvati in Kanchi in order to enable the Sage to witness their wedding. Due to this, every year in the Tamil month of Panguni (March - April) the holy wedding of Shiva and Parvati is being celebrated as a festival. Elsewhere in the temple there is a Sannidhi for Sage Agasthya as referred by Pallava King Mahendra Varman I in his drama Matta Vilasa Prahasanam.

(3) Saint Sundarar once lost both his eyes. Upon arriving at this temple and praying before the God Shiva, he is believed to have got vision of his left eye.

Events

Robert Clive's defence of Arcot was a crucial historical event while East India Company tried to establish its rule in South India. In connection with this event the temple was used as a fortress. The main Gopuram has marks of hits by the cannon balls. A part of the wall near this Gopuram was rebuilt in 1799 AD by Hudson who served as the head assistant to Lionel Place, the then Collector of Chingleput district.

Festivals

Panguni Uthiram Tirukkalyanam



Iravadhan Eswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Built By: Narasimha Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Category: Temple

Location

This temple is in the Kammala street near the Kanchipuram new railway station.

Architecture

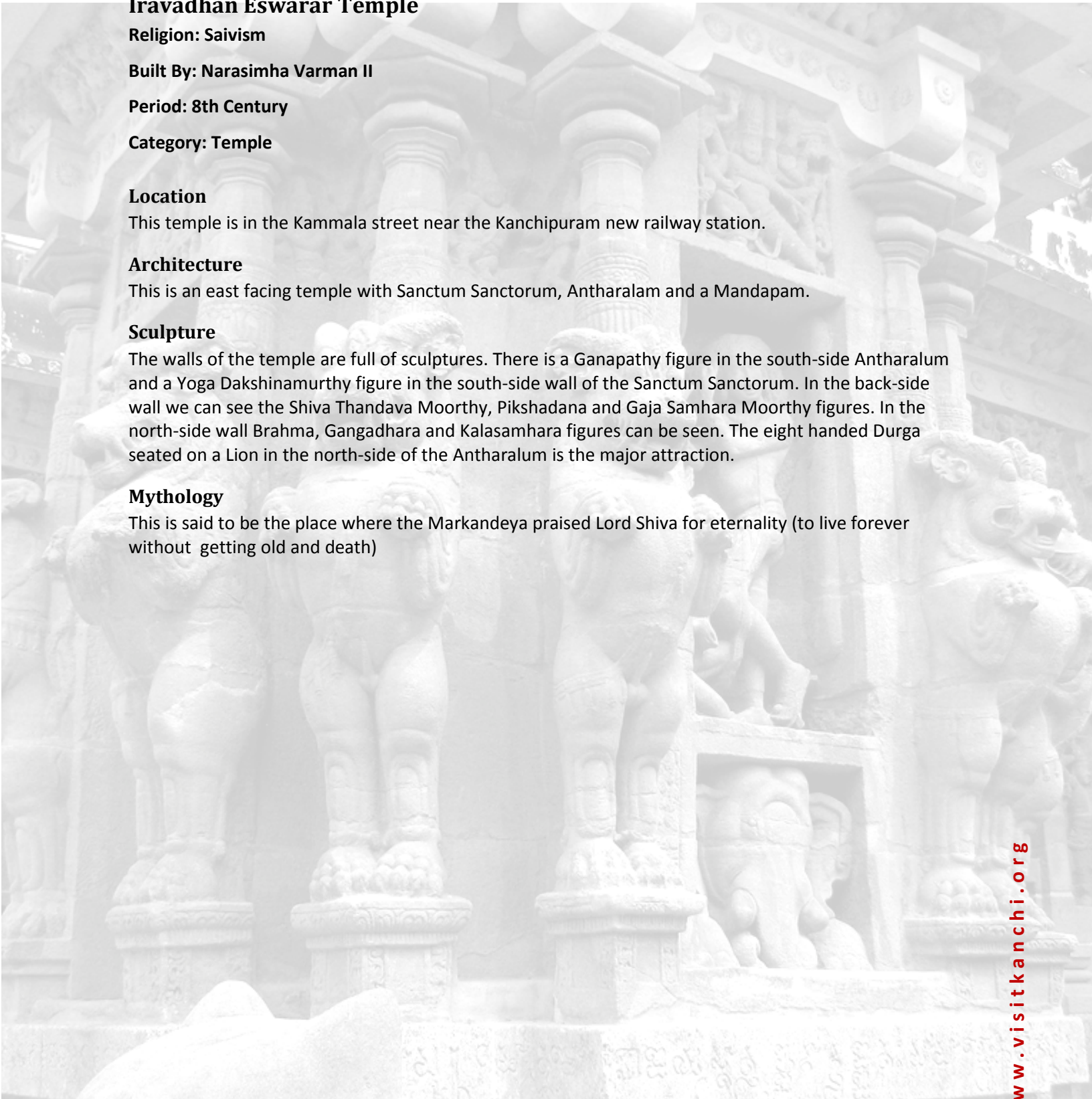
This is an east facing temple with Sanctum Sanctorum, Antharalam and a Mandapam.

Sculpture

The walls of the temple are full of sculptures. There is a Ganapathy figure in the south-side Antharalum and a Yoga Dakshinamurthy figure in the south-side wall of the Sanctum Sanctorum. In the back-side wall we can see the Shiva Thandava Moorthy, Pikshadana and Gaja Samhara Moorthy figures. In the north-side wall Brahma, Gangadhara and Kalasamhara figures can be seen. The eight handed Durga seated on a Lion in the north-side of the Antharalum is the major attraction.

Mythology

This is said to be the place where the Markandeya praised Lord Shiva for eternality (to live forever without getting old and death)



Jurakeswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Timing: 8AM - 11 AM; 4PM to 7 PM

Deity: Jurakeswarar

Period: 10th Century

Category: Temple

This beautiful Chola period temple is in midst of a spacious and quiet place. It has a circular sanctum sanctorum which distinguishes it from other temples in Kanchipuram.

Location

Ekambara Nathar Sannidhi street, Big Kanchipuram.

Architecture

This is an east facing temple. There is a Gopuram at the entrance. The entire temple structure has been raised in the style of Chola architecture. Inside the spacious temple premises three distinct structures can be seen. First one is the Bali Peetam. Second, in a small four pillared roofed structure the Nandi (bull) is seated. Third is the main part of the temple. Artha Mandapam has been constructed in a raised platform. One can get into it both in the right side and left side steps. The path through the Artha Mandapam leads to the sanctum sanctorum. As said earlier, this sanctum sanctorum is circular. The Vimanam or roof above neatly aligns with this circular construction. In technical terms it is called as Gaja Brishta Vimanam (resembling the back posture of an elephant) in the language of Indian architecture. The Shiva temple in Magaral village – it is 15 kilometers away from Kanchi – resembles Jurakeswarar temple in this respect. The windows around the sanctum sanctorum have high quality ornamentations in stone and reveal the great skills of the artists.

Sculpture

In the Adhishtanam and Vimanam of the sanctum sanctorum many sculptures can be seen. Mahishasura Mardhini and dragon like faces can be seen in the base level. The roof has Dwara Balaka, Ganapati, Nandikeswara and other figures. There is a statue of Lord Gubera (God of treasure) in this temple.

Inscription

Three inscriptions have been found in the south and north side base of the temple. Two of them belong to the Chola period and the last one to the Vijaya Nagar period. All the three are in Tamil language. The Chola king Vijaya Kandagopala Deva waived taxes on looms for the benefit of the weaving community in Kanchipuram. The inscriptions also contain details about gift of land administration of the temple.

Mythology

It is believed that the demon Jurakan was destroyed here who was causing Juram (fever) to the people. There is an idol of Jurakeswarar here. This idol is one of the 64 holy idols (considered to be the formless form of God Shiva). The God of this temple cures the ailments of his devotees such as fever and relieves them of the heat present in their body and helps to maintain the normal body temperature.



Kachapeswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Kachapeswarar

Period: 15th Century

Category: Temple

This temple covers an area of about five acres. The major portions of its architecture were built by the Vijaya Nagar rulers. The Jyotir Lingam installed in this temple is known as Kachapeswarar. This name of the God means that he is the benevolent bestower of benefits to the devotees. This place is considered as sacred as Kasi (Varanasi), the seat of God Viswanathar. The presiding deity of this temple is mentioned in the 'Dandi Alankaram' - a Tamil grammatical literary work.

Location

Opposite to Kanchipuram Municipality Office; at the junction of the southern and western Rajaveedhis.

Architecture

The Rajagopuram of the temple faces north at the junction of the southern and western Raja Veedhis. It is situated in a spacious five acre campus. Once we enter into the temple first the tank can be seen at the right side. The Mandapam before the Sanctum is vivid and its pillars clearly show the architectural style of Vijaya Nagar period. Some isolated Lion figured pillars (probably belonging to the Pallava period) can also be seen inside the temple premises.

Sculpture

This temple is not famous for its sculptures. But the interesting thing is that figures belonging to Buddhism can be seen in the pillars of the Mandapam before the Sanctum and in the niches of the outer wall. Some historians have the view that this temple was once a Buddhist Vihara and when it was later converted to a Saivite shrine, some of the pillars of the Buddhists were used in the new temple.

Inscription

The inscripational evidences indicate that the temple was designed as a Panchayatana (five God) shrine. There were five shrines, each one for Shiva, Vishnu, Durga, Ganesa and Surya. The Chola period inscriptions belonging to the reins of Rajarajan I and Rajendran I mention this temple as Anjan-Sandhi-Ambalam meaning temple with five shrines. There is a shrine for God Surya (sun) here and also a stone slab where some Slokas from the 'Surya Shatakam' are inscribed. The presence of a shrine for God Vishnu (Vinnagar Emperuman) is also recorded in an inscription of 13th Century.

Mythology

Once the Devas wanted to have a life without birth and death. So they went to God Shiva and communicated their desire. Shiva told them to churn the sacred milk ocean using the Meru hill as the rod and the snake Vasuki as the thread. If they churn in this way, the divine 'Amirtham' will come out of the milky ocean. If they drink this Amirtham then they can live forever without the fear of death. Knowing the plan of the Devas, their opponents Asuras also competed with them in this endeavour. Standing in the opposite sides, using the snake Vasuki thread around the hill Meru, they started to churn the milky ocean. In course, the Meru hill started to sink into the ocean due to its weight. The Devas were frightened. Seeing them panic, God Vishnu came to their rescue.



He took the form Kachapa (tortoise), dived into the milky ocean and supported the Meru hill from the bottom. Even after its task was over, the tortoise did not get out of the ocean and disturbed the creatures living in the water. So Vishnu was cursed by the sea creatures and could not change his tortoise form. So he came to Shiva and requested a solution. Shiva advised him to go to the sacred city of Kanchi in earth and do worship him under the Murukka tree. If he does this, he will be cured out of his curse. With tortoise form Vishnu came to Kanchi with his consort Lakshimi and worshipped Shiva under Murukka tree. Then out of the grace of Shiva, the original form was restored to Vishnu. Hence the place where Vishnu worshipped Shiva in Kachapa (tortoise) form came to be called as Kachapeswaram.



Kailasa Nathar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Timing: 8.00 AM to 6.00 PM

Deity: Kailasa Nathar

Built By: Narasimha Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Category: Temple

Pallava King Narasimha Varman II, famously known by his title name 'Rajasimhan', raised this marvelous temple for God Shiva and called it 'Rajasimhesvaram' after his own name. This was Kailasa Nathar temple's original name. It was also known in Tamil language as 'Kacchippettu Periya Tirukkatrali' (big stone temple of Kanchipuram). This was a royal shrine and first of its kind in Tamil Nadu. The Chola King Rajarajan visited this temple and drew inspiration to build the majestic Brihadeeswara temple at Tanjore. King Rajasimhan's period is considered to be the golden era in the South Indian temple architecture. In Mamallapuram he built the famous temples in the shore; in Panamalai he built a temple in the hill; in the capital city Kanchipuram he built the monumental Kailasa Nathar temple in the land.

Location

This temple is situated in the western end of the town. One has to go beyond the Sangita Vidwan Naina Pillai street's end. It is nearly 2 kilometres from the bus stand.

Architecture

Kailasa Nathar temple was the first full-fledged architectural temple of Tamil Nadu. This was also the first temple that followed a detailed Agamic plan. 'Agamas' are religious treatises setting rules for temple architecture, sculpture and rituals. Even music and dance performances inside the temples are defined by the Agamas. The temple structure was built with sand stones – typical building blocks used during Pallava period to build architectural temples. The Kailasa Nathar temple's layout is rectangular in plan from east to west.

The sanctum sanctorum is in the western half of the rectangular courtyard. It houses a large Lingam (phallus) which is 16 faceted. In the rear wall of the sanctum the Somaskanda sculptural panel is seen. God Shiva and Goddess Uma are seated. Their little son Skanda is on her mother's lap. Gods Brahma and Vishnu are standing behind on either side of them. This is a typical Pallava iconographic presentation and can be seen in the rear wall of the sanctum behind the Lingam in most of the Shiva temples built by the Pallavas. The sanctum has a double walled system around it. Walking through the narrow space in between the two walls of the sanctum is associated with a religious belief.

The four storeyed Vimanam (roof) over the sanctum is a narrowing square structure up to the Grivam (neck) and the Shikaram (head) is octagonal. The super-structural Talas (storeys) of the Vimanam are built over a bridge of slabs spanning the top of the double walled system around the sanctum. This is considered to be an architectural innovation of that period. Alongside the outer wall of the sanctum seven beautiful Angalayas (small sub-temples) can be seen. They are intricately attached to the sanctum on all sides. They are very rich in figural decoration and ornamentation. There is a Mahamandapam (porch) to the east of the sanctum. It has 12 massive stone pillars with heavy square capitals. One important inscription of the Chalukya King Vikramaditya II is seen inside this Mandapam. This structure



originally stood separate from the sanctum. But later an Ardhmandapam was built to connect these two. The features of this later period structure do not fit with the original style of the temple complex. The entrance to the sanctum is through this Ardhmandapam from the south side.

The inner side of the temple wall along the circumambulatory path is lined with 58 small shrines on all four directions. It looks like a beautiful garland around the temple. To the east of the Mahamandapam a medium sized temple was built by Mahendra Varman III, the son of Rajasimhan. It was named after him as Mahendravarmeswara Griham. Outside the entrance, eight small shrines were later added by the members of the royal family. The third in the right was built by Rajasimha's wife queen Rangapathagai. There is a large Nandi (bull) outside the temple complex.

Sculpture

In walls of the sanctum sanctorum and in the outer wall of this temple lots of sculptures have been carved out. All are based along epic themes. In the inner side of the temple wall we can see the sculptures of dancing Shiva, Tripurantaka, Durga, Somaskanda, Narasimha Vishnu, Ravana, Vali etc. Themes such as, Asura Samharam and destroying of Daksa Yagna can also be seen.

Painting

Inside the sanctum sanctorum, behind the main deity Lingam, we can see the Somaskanda sculpture in the wall. Originally this sculpture was also got painted. But now it can be seen only in a scattered form. The wall paintings found in this temple are equal in importance to that of Ajanta cave paintings.

Inscription

In the outer side of the walls of sanctum sanctorum inscriptions can be seen in Pallava Grantha letters. In these inscriptions the lineage of Pallava ancestors has been mentioned starting from Brahma through Aswathama. Narasimha Varman's other names glorifying his greatness, such as, Kanchi Mahamani, Mamalla, Kulathilaga, Rajasimha, Ranajaya, Ekaveera etc are also mentioned.

The Kannada inscription found in the pillar near the window of the Mandapam reveals an interesting fact. The Chalukya King Vikramaditya II once defeated the Pallavas and captured their capital city Kanchipuram. He visited the Kailasa Nathar temple and was astonished in its beauty and grandeur. The Kannada inscription mentions that Vikramaditya returned everything back to the God of the temple and anyone trying to destroy this inscription will enter the hell like those who once killed the members of Gathika in Kanchi. Which Gathika was this? Who were killed, due to what reason? Further research has to be done. In his Chalukya kingdom, Vikramaditya built another Kailasa Nathar temple following the same architectural model of Kanchi. But it is not as beautiful and great as that of the Kanchi Kailasa Nathar temple. The inscriptions belonging to Chola kings such as, Parantaka and Rajaraja are also found in this temple.

Mythology

(1) Three Asuras, named as Tripura Asuras ruled the three worlds, heaven, earth and underworld. They built three fortresses out of gold, silver and iron. They were staunch devotees of God Shiva and possessed enormous powers. Because of their habit, they always tortured the Devas. The Devas complained about their ordeal to God Vishnu who promised to save them. God Vishnu performed a Yagna and created many demons to destroy the Tripura Asuras. But these demons could not withstand the offensive of the Asuras. Vishnu realised that the Tripuras were great devotees of Shiva and could not be destroyed out of his power. So he devised a strategy to deceive them. Vishnu created a Purusha called Adi Buddha having his own characteristics and sent him to the Asuras along with Naradha. Both of



them befriended the Asuras and made them neglect their devotion to God Shiva. Knowing this, Vishnu reached Kailash along with other Devas and told God Shiva about their sufferings due to Tripura Asuras. Angered by the Asuras' non-devotion and atrocities committed against the Devas, Shiva made a smile towards the Tripuras and instantly they were burnt to ashes. Hence God Shiva is also known as Tripura Anthaka (meaning 'destroyer of Tripura Asuras').

But Vishnu and Naradha feared and worried about their great sin of deceiving the devotees of God Shiva. They knew that this sin could not be washed away in the ensuing millions and millions of years. With this sorrow in their mind they reached Kanchipuram. Immediately after their landing in Kanchi both of them felt less burdened and relieved. There they built the Kailasa Nathar temple and praised Shiva for many years. God Shiva appeared before them and told that their sin could not be easily pardoned. But he gave them one option. He made a narrow circumambulatory path around the sanctum sanctorum and asked them to crawl through the narrow edifices enduring physical pain. God Shiva advised them that doing this again and again for many years will lift them out of the birth-death cycle. Vishnu and Naradha did so and later attained Mukthi. This narrow path way still can be seen there and it is called 'Mukthi entrance'

(2) In the epic Periya Puranam written by Saint Sekkizhar, there is reference to this temple related to the life of Poosalar Nayanar. Pallava King Narasimha Varman II completed the construction of Kailasa Nathar temple in Kanchipuram and fixed the date for its Kumbabhishekam. God Shiva appeared in the dream of the King and ordered him to change the date as he was to accept the invitation of a more staunch devotee who had also built a temple for him in Thiru Nindravoor. The next morning the King waked up and went to the village as told by Shiva. There he could not see any temple there. But the villagers pointed to a Saivite saint called Poosalar Nayanar. When the King reached the Saint's residence he was in deep meditation. The King keenly glanced at the Saint all over and to his astonishment he saw the raising of a temple inside the Saint's mind. He protracted himself before the Saint and built a Shiva temple in that village named as 'Hridayaleeswarar'. He changed the Kumbabhishekam of his temple in Kanchi to another date and named it as Rajasimheswaram.

Events

In this place the Iyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar praised Shiva.



Kamakshi Amman Temple

Religion: Saivism

Timing: 5.30 AM to 12.30 PM; 4.00 PM to 8.30 PM

Deity: Kamakshi Amman

Period: 11th Century

Sanctified By: Sambandar

Category: Temple

This temple is the leading pilgrimage centre of Kanchi and is famous throughout India. Also known by the name 'Kamakoti Peetam', it is considered as one of the 51 Sakthi Peetams of India. The hymns of Thevaram mention this temple as 'Kachi Moodhur Kamakkottam'. The Kamakshi temple is at the very centre of the Kanchi city, with the Ekambaranatha temple to the north-west and the Varadaraja temple to the south-east. It is interesting to note that all the major temples in the city are structured to face the prominent temple of Kamakshi with its four spires.

The seated Kamakshi is a noble image, and to her front is the Sri Chakra in which the Mother Goddess is said to reside in her subtle form. As per the belief, originally Kamakshi was very fierce having the form of 'Ugrasvarupini'. It was Adi Shankara who installed the Sri Chakra, which contained the ferocity of the goddess and transformed her into the calm and beautiful 'Brahmasvarupini'. Since Kamakshi reins supreme in Kanchi, none of the Shiva temples have a separate shrine for the goddess, though an image is kept for ceremonial processions.

Location

Near the town bus stand. Can be approached anywhere from the four Raja Veedhis.

Architecture

The magnificent entrance Gopuram belongs to the Chola period. The Kalyana Mandapam inside the temple was built during the Vijaya Nagar period. The Gayatri Mandapam with 24 pillars is a beautiful architectural marvel. Each one of the pillar represents one letter of the Gayatri Mantram. The shrines of Varaha Avatram of God Vishnu and the Ardhanariswarar are some of the attractions inside the temple. Kamakshi's residence in her brahma-shakti form is in a cave below. She is said to have appeared on earth once to destroy demons, including the notorious Bhandasura.

The Tapas Kamakshi (goddess undergoing penance to expiate the sin of having closed the Lord's eyes) has also been placed in the sanctum. Coming out of this Sanctum, on the left Kamakshi's attendant Varahi can be seen. To her front is the 'Santana Sthambham' indicating the place where King Dasharatha gained the boon of progeny from Goddess Kamakshi. In the first Prakaram (circumambulatory path) the niche of Sastha with his consorts Purna and Pushkala can be seen.

This Sastha is referred in Tamil as 'Meichathan'. A song written in Tamil can also be seen bear this Sastha figure. This song was referred by the great literary commentator Adiyarkku Nallar in his commentary to Silappadikaram – a Tamil epic. But the author of this song is not known. According to this song and as per the legend, Chola king Karikalan on his military expedition to north came to this temple and worshipped Goddess Kamakshi. The Sastha, who was a tutelary deity, gave him the weapon called



Chendu which ensured his victory in the Himalaya regions. The Sastha figure is represented with the typical Chendu weapon in his hands.

Sculpture

In the Kalyana Mandapam built by the Vijaya Nagar kings, many interesting relief sculptures can be seen depicting the Puranic episodes and characters. Interestingly, apart from the figures of the Hindu deities, the images of Buddha (three in number) have been found inside the temple. In the first Prakaram of the temple, a Buddha idol of 7 feet height with pedestal was found. Both hands are broken today. The folds of the flowing robes were exquisitely worked out. The second image was found without head in the second Prakaram. Its hands lie on its lap in the 'Yoga Mudra' pose. The third image was found in the temple garden. It is seated in a Yoga attitude and the hands showing the 'Yoga Mudra'. It is believed that some other images of Buddha got buried in the garden. Hence some historians consider this temple to be originally built as a Buddhist 'Taradevi' (also a Goddess) temple. But some Jains consider this as a temple for their Goddess 'Yakshi' and call by the name 'Vimala Tiruppalli'.

Inscription

As per the inscriptions, Vijaya Nagar Achyuta Raya visited this temple 1554 AD and made munificent grants. Another inscription in poetic form mentions the birth place of poet 'Kalamegam' (who was using pun in poetry) as 'Ennayiram' which is identified with the village where one famous educational institution was functioning during the Chola period. The period of this inscription is said to be 14th Century.

Hymns

The Thevaram hymns of Sambandar and Sundarar; musical Kritis of Thyagarajar, Muthuswamy Diskhitar and Syama Sastry.

Mythology

The mythological importance of the Kamakshi Amman temple may be traced to the Puranic narrative which says that she was originally worshipped as the consort of Ekambareshwara, being part of him in the Ardhanarishwara form. According to the Kanchi Puranam, Parvati once covered the eyes of Shiva in Kailasa, thus plunging creation into darkness, and consequently inviting a curse. She expiated her guilt by taking human birth and undertaking Tapas, worshipping a Linga made of sand. When the nearby river was in flood, she embraced the Linga to guard it against the rising waters. Hence she is kama-kodi, the loving creeper that has entwined herself round the Lord. In the course of evolution of her worship, the Goddess began to be worshipped as the Durga of Kamakottam (the old temple), and later the present temple of Kamakshi was raised.

Events

The glorious city of Kanchi was put to the sword by the Islamic general Malik Kafur in the fourteenth century. Idols were broken down. The Kamakshi temple was one of the major victims. As in other Kanchi temples, worship was stopped in the Kamakshi temple too for several decades, till Kumara Kampana of Vijayanagar drove out the Muslim invaders and restored religious rituals. From then on, the Vijayanagar kings took good care of Kanchi, and Emperor Krishnadeva Raya loved visiting this great city.

Festivals

Masi Mahotsavam



Kumarakkottam

Religion: Saivism

Category: Temple

This is the famous Murugan temple in Kanchipuram. Kumarakkottam of Kanchi is famous like Kandakkottam of Chennai. This temple of God Murugan stands in between the temples of his parents, i.e. Ekambara Nathar temple (Father Shiva) and Kamakshi Amman temple (mother Parvati). The divine trio taken together is famously called by the name 'Somaskanda' (clubbed form of Siva + Uma + Skanda). The idol here posing as Brahma Sashta holding Rudraksha beads and Kamandalam is unique and this type of idol is found nowhere in the country. Kanda Sashti is celebrated with much reverence and fanfare in this temple.

Location

Near the SSKV Girls Higher Secondary School in the western Raja Veedhi.

Hymns

Songs of Arunagiri Nathar and Pamban Swamigal. The famous Tamil epic 'Kanda Puranam' written by Kachiappa Sivachariar was made public in this temple. The author himself was a priest of this temple. There is a place called 'Kanda Purana Mandapam' inside this temple.

Mythology

Once God Brahma went to Kailash - the abode of Supreme God Shiva - to meet Shiva. At the entrance to Kailash, Brahma purposely did not take notice of God Murugan, the son of Shiva. The Angry Muruga blocked the way and asked Brahma some questions testing his knowledge. Muruga asked him what is the meaning of the Pranava Mantra 'OM'? The God Brahma - whose work is to create everything new in the world - did not know the answer. Muruga punished by way of putting Brahma in to the prison. Then Muruga himself undertook the work of 'creation'. Knowing this all the Devas went to Shiva and informed about the incident. Shiva sent many of his deputies and persuaded Murugua to release Brahma. But Muruga did not give in. At last Shiva along with his consort Parvati directly went to Murugan and got Brahma released from prison. Any way Muruga committed sin by putting creator God Brahma in prison. So God Shiva told his son Murugan to go to Kanchi, install a Lingam in his name and worship it in order to get tid of the sin. Murugan came down to earth, reached Kanchi and installed a Lingam in his name. It is called as 'Devasena Patheesam'. God Murugan is the Deva Senapathi (meaning the head of army of Devas fighting Asuras). There is a separate shrine for this Lingam inside Kumarakkottam. It is simple and without any Pujas. But Murugan who praised God Shiva in this place became very famous among the devotees and hence he is the primary deity here.



Mathangeswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Timing: 8 AM to 11 AM ; 4PM to 7 PM

Deity: Mathangeswarar

Built By: Narasimha Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Category: Temple

This marvellous single structure is one of the eight monuments of Pallava architecture in Kanchipuram. It is surrounded on all sides by residential buildings. So it is not visible from the roadside. Once the visitors walk through the narrow pathway and enter into the temple campus, it is certain that the eyes will wide open with surprise in instinctual response. The experience will be like finding a hidden treasure.

Location

In the vicinity of the town bus stand, opposite to the CSI hospital.

Architecture

This typical Pallava temple is medium sized one, but has been raised massively in a small space to exhibit a gigantic look. The Muktheswarar and Piravadhan Eswarar temples in Kanchi share this architectural style. These temples are shining examples of architects' vision and creativity. It seems that the Pallava kings could have instructed the architects about the 'small but beautiful' concept. This sand stone structure has an Ardha Mandapa. This Adhishthanam is nearly 6 feet high. So to get into the Mandapam one has to climb the steep steps. The pillars of the Mandapam have typical Pallava style lion figures at the bottom. The Vimanam of the temple has been structured in the Vesara (circular) style.

Sculpture

Inside the walls of the Mandapam>Ardha Mandapam the many divine figures of Shiva and Sakthi have been carved out. Shiva in Urdhva Thandavam and the Sakthi slaying the demon has been so livingly portrayed. Both outside the Mandapam opposite to the temple and before the main deity inside the sanctum sanctorum the Nandi (bull) can be seen. Behind the Lingam in the sanctum sanctorum, on the wall the carving of Somaskanda Murthi can be seen. This is also typical in the Pallava period.

Mythology

In this place, the sage Mathangar worshipped God Shiva. With the grace of the God the sage was able to gain control over the five senses.



Muktheswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Timing: 10 AM to 11 AM.

Built By: Narasimha Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Category: Temple

Location

It is situated in the middle of the Eastern Raja Veedhi, between Pookkadai Chatram and bus stand.

Architecture

This west facing temple has a Sanctum Sanctorum and an Artha Mandapam. This Mandapam has four pillars. The two pillars in the front are having lion figures; the other two pillars at the back are usual ones. The entire structure is built up of sand stone.

Sculpture

Inside the Artha Mandapam, the north-side wall has Ravana Anugraha Murthi figure. In the south-side wall the famous Siva Thandava sculptures have been carved out. In the outer side, the north side wall has Siva Urthva Thandava, Durgai, Subrahmanyar, Hariharan, Suryan, Chandran and Dwarabalakar sculptures. In the southern wall the figures of Andakasuravada Murthi, Yoga Dakshinamurthi, Shiva in Yogasana posture, Shiva in sitting posture with Uma Devi, Uma Maheswarar and Ganapathy have been beautifully sculpted.

Inscription

The Pallava queen not only appointed administrative personnel, but also bestowed the services of 18 classical dancers for regular performance before the deity. This information and the names of all these dancers are registered in the inscriptions found inside this temple. This is an important evidence which places Kanchipuram well before Tanjore, in the historical map of dance and music. Kanchipuram can be aptly hailed as the first Music Academy of South India.



Onakantha Eswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Onakantha Eswarar

Period: 11th Century

Sanctified By: Sundarar

Category: Temple

This east facing temple is situated on the outskirts of the Kanchipuram town and related to the incidence of Saint Sundarar getting gold from the deity. This is one of the five Saivite temples in Kanchipuram that were sanctified by Devaram hymns.

Location

Panjupetta. Opposite to the electricity sub station.

Hymns

The Devaram hymns of Saint Sundarar praise the God of this temple.

Mythology

Vanan was a great Asura. Once he came to Kanchi, installed a Shiva Lingam and praised it for a long time. He got the vision of God Shiva in dancing. In a state of bliss this Asura played drums in accordance with the dance beats of the God. Much pleased with this Asura, God Shiva gave him thousand hands. This temple can be seen in Kanchi which bears the name of the Asura and called as 'Vaanesam'. This Asura had two other Asuras as his deputies. They were called as 'Onan' and 'Kanthan'. They were also great devotees of God Shiva. They too came to Kanchi, installed Shiva Lingas in their names and praised God Shiva for many years. God appeared before them and asked what they want. They replied that they want real knowledge and union with him. They also asked that even after their life time, anybody praise these Lingams have to be protected by the God. Appeased by their selflessness, God Shiva granted what they wanted. Even though there are two Lingams housed in two separate shrines, the God is known by the single name 'Onakantha Eswarar'. Saint Sundarar too praised the God in the same name in his Pathigam and got gold from him.



Piravadhan Eswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Piravadhan Eswarar

Built By: Narasimha Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Category: Temple

This small temple is situated in a secluded place in the outskirts of Kanchipuram town area. This Pallava temple resembles Mathangeswarar and Muktheswarar temples in architecture though comparatively smaller than them.

Location

This temple is opposite to the Iravadhan Eswarar temple near the New Railway Station. The temple gate is at the start of the Jawaharlal Nehru and site of the temple is further up the street, to the south of the Banyan tree in a residential area.

Architecture

Sand stones have been used to build this temple. The entire structure is raised on a 3 to 4 feet high Adhithanam. There is a small Mukha Mandapam before the sanctum sanctorum. To get into the temple one has to climb five steps above. The Vimanam is circular at its top.

Sculpture

In the outside wall at the corners the standing lion figures have been carved in typical Pallava style. In every possible space in the four sides of the wall, beautiful sculptures depicting various divine figures have been carved out. Dakhinamurthi, Durga and dancing Shiva postures are some among them

Mythology

When sage Vamadevar was inside his mother's womb he prayed to God Shiva with great devotion to prevent him from being born on this earth. The sage was very much afraid of the cycle of births and deaths. Shiva was pleased by the child's sincere devotion to him and the very advanced thoughts even in mother's womb. He told the sage Vamadevar to go to sacred Kanchi and pray him there to get rid of the cycle of births and deaths. He took God's advice, went to Kanchi after his birth, established an idol of God Shiva there, worshipped him and freed himself from rebirths. So the sacred place came to be known as Piravathanam.



Siddheeswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: God - Siddheesar (Manjal Neer Koothar)

Category: Temple

Location

Kamarajar Salai. Situated near the Manjal Neer canal.

Architecture

The temple has Sanctum Sanctorum, Artha Mandapam, Mandapam>Maha Mandapam, Front Mandapam, Nartha Mandapam, Bali Peetam and Prakaram. Except the figure of the deity all other structures were raised only at a later stage.

Sculpture

This Linga of this temple is the biggest of all Shiva temples in Kanchipuram.



Sokkeeswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Sokkeesar

Built By: Uttama Cholan

Period: 10th Century

Category: Temple

This small beautiful temple is the finest example of early Chola architecture in Kanchipuram. It is also known by the name 'Kowsikesam'. It has been saved from the dilapidated condition and now protected by the Archaeological Department of Government of Tamil Nadu.

Location

Near the Kamakshi Amman temple in Big Kanchipuram. If the visitor is facing the main Rajagopuram, then it is in the right hand corner of the road. The temple's marriage hall is adjoining it.

Architecture

This is an east facing temple. The court of the temple is in a pit. There is wall, a little distance away, surrounding the pit. This temple is one among the temples in Kanchi which were raised fully as a granite structures. From the Adhithanam to the Vimanam it is a complete stone structure. It has sanctum sanctorum with Mandapam>Ardha Mandapam.

Sculpture

The divine figures of Dakshinamurthy, Yoga Narasimhar and Brahma figures have been neatly sculpted out. In the south side, Ganapati figure is seen. The Ganapati is seated on the Padma Peetam in Lalithasanam posture. He has four arms. In the two upper arms he holds Angusam and Paasam; in the lower arms he holds Dantham and Modhakam. He has a Makudam above his head. Below the Peetam his Mooshika Vahanam (Rat vehicle) is seen and it is pulled by two Ganas. At the top of the temple in the upper row, the figures of Kowsiki and an elephant worshipping God Shiva and his consort Goddess Parvathi can be seen. The sculptural narration of Kannappar (one of the 63 Nayanmars) removing his eye and fitting it into the socket of the eye of God Shiva receives the attention of the visitor to this temple. The figures of Vaali and Sugrivan (Monkey Gods), celestial cow and sacred peacock worshipping the God and Goddess in this temple are other attractions.

Inscription

An inscription of Uttama Chola has been in the temple. It was issued during the 15th regional year (985 AD) of the king. This inscription mentions the temple as 'Therkku Irundha Nakkar Koil' (southward temple). According to the information contained in it, the Kanchipuram town administrators had sold 300 Kuzhi (measurement in Tamil) land to one 'Kaikkolan Acchan Senacchan' who served in the Chola army. He granted this entire land to meet the expenses for daily worship of Karikala Pillayar in the temple. This Pillayar is none but the figure of God Ganapati found in the south side Devakoshtam.

Mythology

This temple is also called by the name 'Kowsikesam'. Kowsiki was a divine woman who is believed to have born out of the sweat of Goddess Parvati's brow. She worshipped God Shiva and Goddess Parvati here.



Thanthondri Eswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Period: 7th Century

Category: Temple

Location

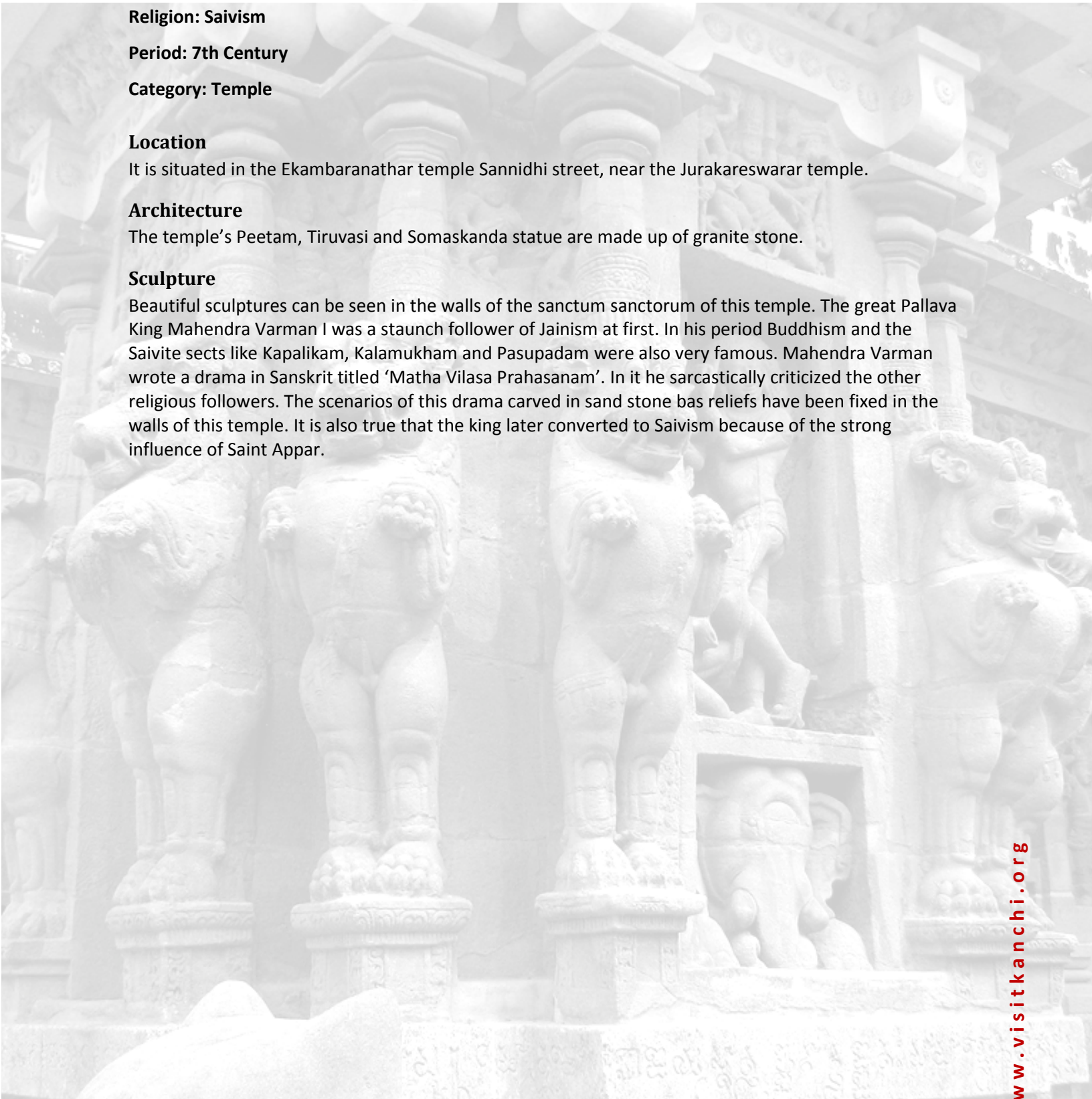
It is situated in the Ekambaranathar temple Sannidhi street, near the Jurakeswarar temple.

Architecture

The temple's Peetam, Tiruvasi and Somaskanda statue are made up of granite stone.

Sculpture

Beautiful sculptures can be seen in the walls of the sanctum sanctorum of this temple. The great Pallava King Mahendra Varman I was a staunch follower of Jainism at first. In his period Buddhism and the Saivite sects like Kapalika, Kalamukha and Pasupadama were also very famous. Mahendra Varman wrote a drama in Sanskrit titled 'Matha Vilasa Prahasanam'. In it he sarcastically criticized the other religious followers. The scenarios of this drama carved in sand stone bas reliefs have been fixed in the walls of this temple. It is also true that the king later converted to Saivism because of the strong influence of Saint Appar.



Tirukkaleeswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Sathya Viradha Nathar

Sanctified By: Sambandar

Category: Temple

This temple is also called as 'Kacchi Tiruneri Karaikkadu'. It is situated on the eastern outskirts of the Kanchipuram town. It is one among the five Saivite temples that were sanctified by the hymn of Devaram. The temple tank 'Indra Tirtham' is considered very sacred.

Location

In the old railway station road, a little south opposite to the Government General Hospital, a small road leads to this temple.

Hymns

Saint Sambandar sanctified this temple through his Devaram hymns.

Mythology

(1) Buthan is one of the nine divine celestial planets as per the Hindu belief. He was born to Chandran (moon). He also wanted to attain the same divine celestial status like his father. So he asked his father how to achieve this. Chandran told his son to go to the temple of Sathya Viradha Nathar temple in the eastern end of Kanchipuram and praise the God there for years to attain his goal. Budhan did as his father told him. God Shiva appeared with his consort on his bull Vahanam before Budhan. God asked about his wish. Budhan told that he wanted to become a celestial body like his father and also anybody immerse in this temple pond on wednesday's have to be protected by the God. These two boons he asked from Shiva. The God too granted what he liked.

(2) Indra who ruled the heaven once asked his teacher the way to attain Mukti - liberation from all bonds. He guided his student to go place called Kacchi Neri Karaikkadu in Kanchipuram and meditate upon God Shiva (Sathya Viradha Nathar) there after dipping in the temple pond. Indra did so every day. Thrice in a day Indra dipped in the pond and praised the God with much devotion. God Shiva appeared before Indra and inquired about his needs. Indra asked for a permanent place in his abode. Then he also asked God that this sacred temple pond has to be called by his name. Shiva granted both his wishes. Hence, the temple pond is still called as 'Indra Tirtham'.



Tirumetralli Nathar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Deity: Odha Urugesar

Period: 13th Century

Sanctified By: Appar

Category: Temple

This is one of the five temples which were sanctified by the hymns of Devaram. While singing in this temple Saint Appar referred to Kanchi as 'a place knows no bounds in learning'. Also Appar did the Uzhavarappani (cleaning the temple premises as a service) here. This temple got its name as it faces the western direction (Metralli means 'temple facing west').

Location

Pillayar Palayam, Tirumetralli street.

Inscription

Inscriptional evidences are there indicating renovation work done by the later Cholas during the 13th Century AD.

Hymns

Saints Appar and Sundarar sang in praise of the deity here. In his verses Appar hailed Kanchi as a centre of learning which has no limits for knowledge.

Mythology

As per legend, in this temple God Vishnu got the Shiva Saaroopam (figure of God Shiva) hearing the sacred hymns of Saint Sambandar. The presiding deity is actually Vishnu converted into Shiva. Attaining the figure of God Shiva is one of the methods of attaining Mukthi (liberation). God Vishnu wanted this. So Vishnu came here and for years he did penance to tell his wish to God Shiva. Appreciating his efforts, Shiva appeared before Vishnu and asked him to wait till the arrival of his devotee and child prodigy Sambandar. Many years later, Saint Sambandar came to this temple. Until then Vishnu continued his meditation. Sambandar sang many heartfelt hymns in praise of God Shiva here. Hearing them both Vishnu's heart and body melted and he attained Shiva Saaroopam as per his wish. Vishnu converted into Shiva due to hearing the songs of Sambandar was called as 'Odha Urugesar' (melted while hearing the songs). This deity is the main deity in this temple while Shiva himself has a small separate shrine.



Upanishad Brahman Mutt

Religion: Saivism

Period: 18th Century

Sivarama Sastri was the only son born after a long wait to the couple Sadasiva Sastri and Lakshmi Ammal. They lived in a small village called Brahma Puram on the banks of river Palar near Kanchipuram. Sivarama sastri got married and lived in north Chennai. His wife died immediately after giving birth to a male child. Frustrated Sastri gave the child to his brother and departed to north for religious tour. He toured many places and finally settled at Kanchi. Saint Vasudevendra gave Sanyasam to Sivarama Sastri and assumed the name 'Ramachandrendra Swamigal'. Afterwards he stayed at Agasthyar Ashram near Agatheeswarar temple. Sivarama Sastri was a great exponent of Vedas and Upanishads. He wrote excellent commentaries to all the 108 Upanishads. Hence he was popularly known as 'Upanishad Brahman' than his sanyasa title Ramachandrendra. Karvet Zamindar was a great devotee of Upanishad Brahman. He built a Mutt for him near Agasthyar Ashram which is called as Upanishad Brahman Mutt.

This Mutt was very much related to music. Upanishad Brahman himself was more musical oriented as he wrote many Divya Nama Sangeethanas. Moreover he invited the great musicians of his time, Thyagarajar and Muthuswami Diskhitar to his mutt. Both of them accepted his invitation, came to Kanchipuram and stayed in his mutt. During this stay Thyagarajar composed one Kriti on Kamakshi Amman and to Kritis on Varadaraja Perumal. In the mutt we can see a Rama Yantram made up of Salagramam. It has many dimensions and Aksharas in Grantha letters. Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana idols made up of marble stone in north Indian style are also seen. Opposite to it in a triangular closet Anjaneyar stands. In a Rudraksha Mandapam, Ardhnarishwara (in Bana Linga form), Ambal, Ganapati, Surya and Vishnu appear as Panchayatana Murthis. All these idols are regularly worshipped. While Thyagarajar stayed in this mutt he is said to have worshipped the Rama, Seetha and Lakshmana images. Upanishad Brahman lived during the later part of the 18th Century and earlier part of 19th Century.

Location

End of the Sangita Vidwan Naina Pillai street.



Veerateswarar Temple

Religion: Saivism

Category: Temple

Out of the 63 Nayanmars, three Nayanmars were born or lived at Kanchi. They were Tirukkurippu Thondar, Sakkiya Nayanar and Iyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar. Three temples in Kanchi are also linked with the life and mission of these Nayanmars. The Veeratteswarar temple is revered by people of Kanchi to be the place where Sakkiya Nayanr attained Mukthi.

Location

It is in Appa Rao street, otherwise in the northern end of the Damalvar street.

Mythology

(1) This temple also called as 'Veerattahasam'. In Sanskrit language 'Hasam' means 'Laughter'. 'Atta Hasam' means 'Angerous louder laughter'. God Shiva destroyed everything in the universe during the end of a Yugam and created everything anew during the start of next Yugam. During the process of this recreation, he danced vigourously with that thunderous laughter. After the recreation of universe was over, he calmed down in a Lingam form in this temple. Hence this temple is called by the name 'Veerattahasam'.

(2) God Vishnu wanted to change the dark complexion of his body color. So he came to his place and worshipped God Shiva daily with 14000 lotus flowers. While doing so he stayed at the place which is nowadays called as 'Pachai Vannar temple'. After the color of his body became coral red he stayed at the place which is the present day 'Pavala Vannar temple'. This Saivite version of Pavala Vanna Perumal is totally different to that of the Vaishnavite version.

(3) Many saints and ascetics are believed to have attained Mukthi in this temple. Once a Siddhar named Kongana Munivar came to this temple. To test the power of the Lingam of this temple, he put his magical medicinal pill on it. Quickly the Lingam sucked the pill into it. The saint was very much surprised. Because any object on which this pill was put was burnt and turned into ashes. Understanding the greatness of this Lingam, the saint worshipped it for many years and blessed it.

Events

This is believed to be the place where Sakkiya Nayanar praised God Shiva.



VAISHNAVITE SPOTS

Arpakkam - Adi Kesava Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: Adhi Kesava Perumal

Period: 10th Century

Category: Temple

It was originally named as 'Thiru Veera Vinnagar Azhwar Temple' during the Chola period. During the reign of Chola King Rajarajan III the name was changed to 'Kesava Perumal Temple'. At present it is called as 'Adhi Kesava Perumal Temple'.

Location

Arpakkam village is at a distance of 15 kms to south of Kanchipuram. One has to take the eastern route (locally called as 'Keel road') to Uttiramerur from Kanchipuram. By car, this village can be reached within 15 to 20 minutes of travel. After reaching the Arpakkam junction (called Arpakkam Mandapam), one has to take left to enter into the village. Road conditions are good.

Inscription

The temple has a Chola period inscription. It refers to the fact that the Queen of Chola King Rajarajan I has gifted lands to the temple for daily worship. This inscription mentions the name of the Queen as 'Kannara Nachi Pidara Nangai alias Sembian Mukkhizhan Adigal'. From this, it is known that the Queen belongs to the royal family some Kannada dynasty. Another inscription found inside the temple mentions that the Queen of Chola King Rajendran II has gifted lands to the temple to burn lights every day. She had made this gift to the God of this temple for the well being of her father and mother. In this inscription the father of the Queen is named as 'Pallava Rayar Vikrama Kesari'. From this it is known that this Queen belonged to some branch of the erstwhile Pallava lineage.



Ashta Bhujam Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: God - Adikesava Perumal; Goddess - Alarmel Mang

Period: 9th Century

Category: Temple

Location

Near Rangasamy Kulam in Little Kachipuram.

Inscription

Four inscriptions have been found in this temple. The inscription of Chola King Rajendra I (1034 AD) gives information about land grants to this temple for the purpose of daily pooja and lighting.

Hymns

It is sanctified by the hymns of Saints Peyazhwar (99th song of Mundram Thiruvandhadhi) and Tirumangai Azhwar (2-8 songs of Periya Thirumozhi and 128th song of Periya Thirumadal).

Mythology

(1) Once God Brahma performed a Yagna without his wife Goddess Saraswati. Angered, Saraswati tried to disturb the Yagna by sending an army of demons. Brahma sought the help of God Vishnu. He killed all the demons. Saraswati then sent Kali. Vishnu controlled Kali in Chithirai Rohini. (There is a Kali temple near this temple to mark this event). Saraswati made one more offence by sending a ferocious snake. It saw Vishnu with eight hands, each one holding a dreadful weapon. Out of fear, the snake instantly surrendered to Vishnu. At the orders of Vishnu the serpent (it is considered to be Shiva) guarded the Yagasala.

(2) Once Mahasunda Muni involved himself in a serious penance seeking great powers. Indira, the leader of Devaloham, thought that the Muni was aiming to surpass him. So he made tricks to distract the Muni from his penance. First he sent some Apsaras (heavenly beauties). The Muni did not even made a single look at them. Dejected Indira then sent some elephants and asked them to enjoy themselves right before him. Tempted Mahasunda Muni morphed himself into an elephant to mingle with other elephants. But the positive effects of his previous penance never left him. Mahasunda Muni in elephant form daily worshipped Vishnu. One day, he was caught by a crocodile while he was gathering flowers for God in a pond. Vishnu heard his cries and immediately came to his help. He slewed the crocodile and saved Muni from danger. This is called Gajendra (elephant) Moksham.



Azhagiya Manavala Jeeyar Mutt

Religion: Vaishnavism

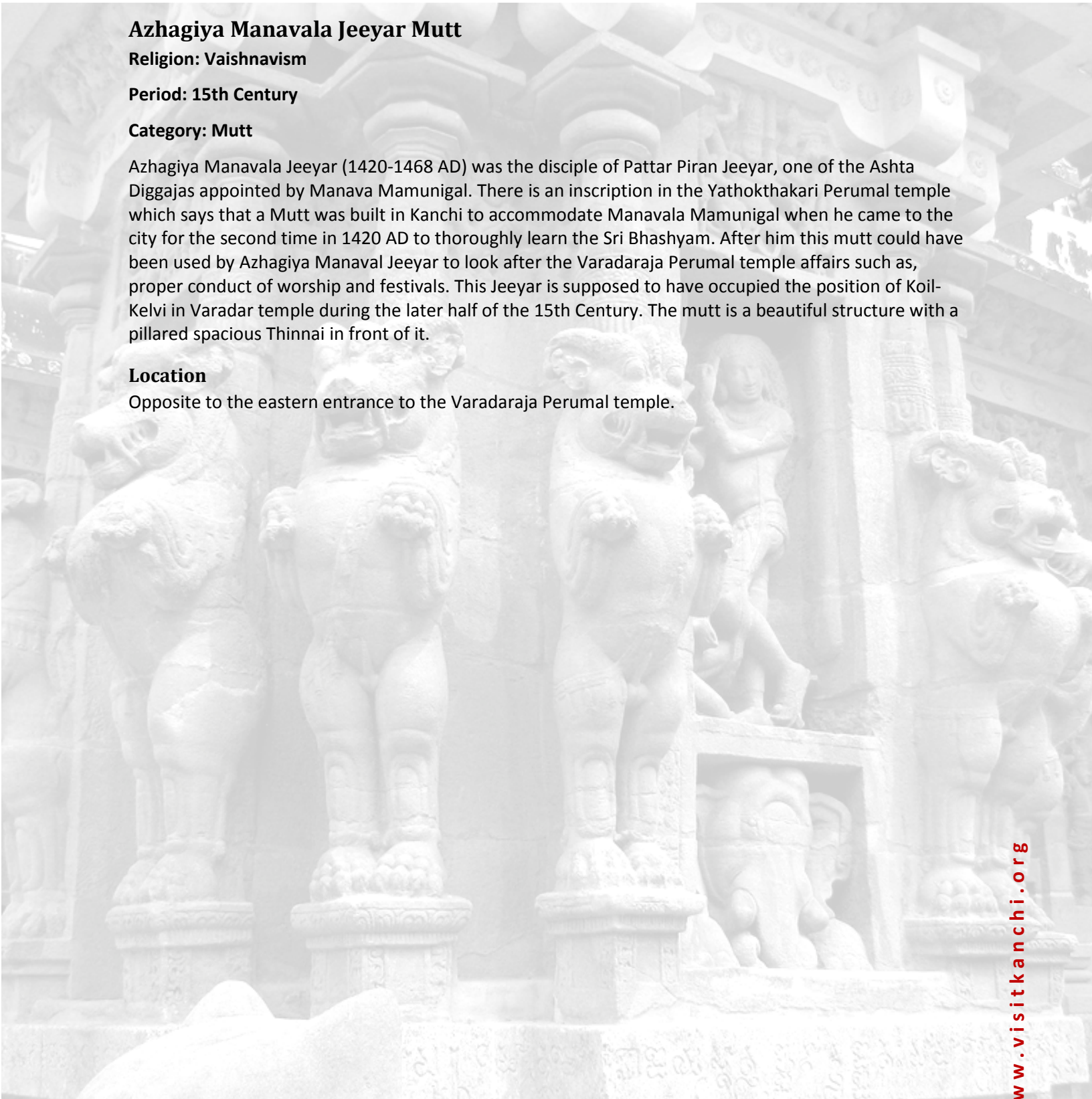
Period: 15th Century

Category: Mutt

Azhagiya Manavala Jeeyar (1420-1468 AD) was the disciple of Pattar Piran Jeeyar, one of the Ashta Diggajas appointed by Manava Mamunigal. There is an inscription in the Yathokthakari Perumal temple which says that a Mutt was built in Kanchi to accommodate Manavala Mamunigal when he came to the city for the second time in 1420 AD to thoroughly learn the Sri Bhashyam. After him this mutt could have been used by Azhagiya Manaval Jeeyar to look after the Varadaraja Perumal temple affairs such as, proper conduct of worship and festivals. This Jeeyar is supposed to have occupied the position of Koil-Kelvi in Varadar temple during the later half of the 15th Century. The mutt is a beautiful structure with a pillared spacious Thinnai in front of it.

Location

Opposite to the eastern entrance to the Varadaraja Perumal temple.



Pandava Thoodhu Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: God - Pandava Thoodhar; Goddesses - Bama, Rukmani

Period: 11th Century

Category: Temple

Location

This temple is in Big Kanchipuram area. It lies south of Ekambara Nathar temple and west of Jurakeswarar temple.

Inscription

In the bottom part of the western wall of this temple inscriptions have been found. Chola King Kulothunga I visited this temple with his wives Tiribuvanamudayar and Cholakula Valli. Upon his visit he granted lands for the maintenance of this temple.

Hymns

This temple is sanctified by the hymns of Saints Boothathazwar (94th song of Irondam Tiruvandhadhi), Peyazhwar (30th song of Mundram Tiruvandhadhi), Tirumazhizai Azhwar (63rd and 64th songs of Tiruchanda Virutham) and Tirumangai Azhwar (6-10-4 song of Periya Tirumozhi and 127th song of Periya Tirumadal).

Mythology

When the Pandavas and Gauravas made up their mind to go for a war, God Krishna went as an ambassador of Pandavas to the court of Gauravas to avoid deadly war. Duryodana, the eldest among the Gaurava brothers did not like the peace initiative and decided to kill Krishna. He dug a big pit and put wrestlers and armed men in it. He then covered the top of the pit with bamboo and above it prepared a seat for Krishna. If Krishna sit on it, he will fall in and be killed. Aware of the plot set against him, Krishna took the Viswaroopam - enlarged his size manifold - and crushed all those inside the pit. Everybody inside the royal court praised the God in divine ecstasy. Krishna offered eyesight to the blind Dirudarashtra, father of Duryodana, to see his Viswaroopam. Seeing the grandeur of Krishna standing before him, Dirudarashtra said he did not want to see anything else in life hereafter. So again he lost his vision. The sanctum sanctorum of this temple resembles the underground pit created by Duryodana. The idol of the God Krishna is very huge, nearly 30 feet tall. Such a big idol of Krishna cannot be seen anywhere else.

Events

Yagnamurthi, the great scholar of Advaita philosophy was defeated by Saint Ramanujar in a philosophical debate held in the premises of this temple. After this, he became the disciple of Ramanujar and assumed the name Arulala Perumal (Emperumanar). He lived near this temple with his followers and spread Vaishnavam.



Parakala Mutt

Religion: Vaishnavism

Period: 14th Century

Category: Mutt

This is a Vaishnavite mutt belonging to the Vadakalai sect. This is the oldest mutt of Vaishnavism established in the year 1360 AD by Brahma Tantra Swatantra Jeeyar who was the disciple of Vedanta Desikar's son Kumara Varadacharyar. In 1379 AD the Parakala mutt was shifted to Tirupati for some historical reasons.

Location

Near the Vilakkoli Perumal temple



Pavala Vanna Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: Pavala Vanna Perumal

Sanctified By: Tirumangai Azhwar

Category: Temple

This is one of the 14 Divya Desams situated in Kanchipuram and one of the 5 Vishnu temples situated in Big Kanchipuram.

Location

Opposite to the Pachai Vanna Perumal temple. Big Kanchipuram.

Architecture

This is a medium sized temple situated in a fairly large space. It walls are high and a many pillared big Mandapam can be seen. The Vimanam above the sanctum resembles the style of Chola architecture.

Inscription

One Telugu inscription has been found in this temple.

Hymns

Saint Tirumangai Azhwar has sung in praise of the deity in the Tirunedunthandagam. The Azhwar is surprised to see the coral red colour of Perumal and wonders which is the original colour of the God. In the legendary four Yuga (each having very, very long years) classification Perumal was white in Treta Yuga; red in Krita Yuga; green in Dwapara Yuga; and blue in the present Kali Yuga.

Mythology

(1) Brahma performed a Yagnam without his consort Saraswati. Angered Saraswati brought many demons to disturb the Yagnam. In retaliation Vishnu came forward to rescue Brahma. As he slayed all the demons he got blood all over his body. Thus he got the red coral colour. Due to this colour he is called as 'Pavala Vannan' (Pavalam in Tamil means coral. Vannam means colour). (2) Brighu Muni after kicking the Perumal in the chest felt repentant and came here to perform penance. Perumal appeared to him as he sits in Vaikundam with Adishesha as the couch. There is a separate Sannidhi for Brighu Muni in this temple.



Singa Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: God - Mukunda Nayakan; Goddess - Amrutha Valli

Category: Temple

Location

This temple lies further south to the Vilankoli Perumal temple. It is nearer the south gate (Keel gate) bus stop. This stop is in the eastward route to Uttiramerur town.

Inscription

One inscription has been found in this temple.

Hymns

This temple is sanctified by the hymns of Saints Peyazhwar (26th, 34th and 62nd songs of Mundram Tiruvandhadhi) and Tirumangai Azhwar (127th song of Periya Tirumadal). Saint Vedanta Desikar wrote 'Kamasika Ashtakam' in praise of the deity here.

Mythology

Goddess Saraswati commissioned a demon named Kapalika to destroy the Yagam being performed by her husband Brahma. Vishnu took the form of Narasimha (a form with lion head and human body), fought away the demon and saved the Yagam.



Ulakalanda Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: Ulagalanda Perumal; mirthavalli Nachiyar

Built By: Kulothungan I

Period: 11th Century

Sanctified By: Tirumangai Azhwar

Category: Temple

This temple and the Kamakshi Amman temple situated nearby are the two temples which are in the centre of Kanchipuram. Because around these temples only the four Raja Veedhis have been laid. The traditional name of Ulagalanda Perumal temple is Tiruvooragam which is also a Divya Desam. Some historians point out that in ancient the Ulagalanda Perumal temple was considered to be the core centre of Kanchi and the entire town structure was built around it. Apart from its own status as a Divya Desam, there are three other shrines inside this temple which are also Divya Desams.

Out of the three postures of Vishnu, such as, Nindran (standing), Irundhan (sitting) and Kidanthan (reclining), this temple constitute the first category - God Vishnu is in standing posture as Trivikrama inside the sanctum of this temple. Another important fact pertaining to this temple is that Parimel Azhagar, the great commentator to Tamil literary works such as Tirukkural was once worked as a priest in this temple.

Location

This temple is situated the town bus stand. The famous Kamakshi Amman temple is near by it.

Architecture

As this is an oldest temple and over the time the surrounding places were raised, the temple is situated in place below the ground level. This old temple was rebuilt and enlarged during the Chola period. The Mandapam and the Thayar Sannidhi were later additions. This is a west facing temple. There is a Rajagopuram at the entrance. Once we enter the temple, there is a Bali Peetam, to the east of it is Dvaja Sthampam and to its east lie the Garudan Sannidhi facing the Moola Sthanam or the sanctum sanctorum.

The sanctum of this temple along with that of Pandava Thoodhu Perumal temple and the Yathokthakari Perumal temple is large, high and rectangular in plan to accommodate the huge figures inside. It has a massive Shala Shikara (hollow spire). Just outside this sanctum and to its north lie the Utsavar idol with five heads. There is an inner circumambulatory path around the sanctum. There are separate shrines for other Divya Desams inside this temple. They are - Neeragam (God - Jagadeesa Perumal, Nilamangai Thayar), Karagam (God - Karunakara Perumal, Padmasini Nachiyar), Karvanam (God - Kalvar Perumal, Kamala Valli Nachiyar).

Sculpture

The 36 feet tall image of the deity inside the sanctum is the major attraction in this temple. The God stands majestically with his left leg up. He has his left hand stretched, with two pointed fingers, to say that he has measured the earth and the universe. The right hand has one pointed finger, to ask where he could plan his third step.



Inscription

Twenty one stone inscriptions have been found inside this temple. In these the temple is referred to as 'Tiruvlooragathu Nindraruliya Paramaswami Tirukkoil'. The inscription belonging to Chola King Kulothunga-I is the largest. It starts with the words 'Pugazh Madhu Vilanga'. It records the details regarding lands gifted to this temple as per the wish of the Queen Chola Kulavalli in order to conduct worships and food offerings. Previously, The Saliya Nagarattar of this city accepted to cultivate this land but left uncultivated, so it was resumed back and gifted to the temple again. The 14th Century inscription belonging to the Sambuvarayas records the grant of permission to a person to enact plays and dramas in the streets of Kanchipuram town and other villages in the Tondai Mandalam.

One inscription of the 12th Century records the fact that the 48000 Nagarattar families in Kanchipuram accepted the Tiruvlooragam God as their family deity and offered to provide different kinds of offerings, worship and special festivals for the temple. The earliest 9th Century inscription belonging to the Pallava King Nandhi Varman-III registers the fact that the King has waived taxes for the goods sold in Kanchipuram by the traders of Videl Vidugu Cheri. The goods that were sold ranged from camphor to footwear. Inscriptions pertaining to the modern periods such as, 18th and 19th Centuries also have been found here.

Hymns

Tirumazhisai Azhwar (63 and 64 songs of Tirucchanda Virutham) and Tirumangai Azhwar (8 and 13 songs of Tirunedunthandagam; 70 song of Siriya Tirumadal and 128 song of Periya Tirumadal) have sanctified the Tiruvlooragam. The other Divya Desams Tiruneeragam, Tirukkaragam and Tirukkarvanam have been sanctified by Tirumangai Azhwar in one verse (8th song of Tirunedunthandagam).

Mythology

(1)During the Trivikrama Avatharam Maha Bali could not worship the Perumal in the Viswa Roppam. So he did penance to see the Perumal in Viswa Roopam. Since he was in neither world, it is believed that Perumal took the form of Adishesha to guide him to this world and gave Darshan to Maha Bali in the Trivikrama form. (2) Kaaraha Maharishi performed penance and obtained very high level of knowledge. To honour him the Kshetram was name after him as 'Karagam'. (3) Markandeya performed penance on the banks of the river Badra to behold Pralayam. Perumal with his Maya recreated the Pralayam scene and himself as a small child on a banyan leaf. The Kshetram was named after this incident as 'Neeragam'.



Vaikuntha Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: Vaikunda Perumal, Vaikunda Valli Thayar

Built By: Nandi Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Sanctified By: Tirumangai Azhwar

Category: Temple

This temple was named as 'Parameswara Vinnagaram' by its creator, Nandi Varman II. This is a royal shrine like the Kailasa Nathar temple and equivalent to its glory. The King Nandi Varman II belonged to a different lineage among the Pallavas. In some respects this king wanted to be quite opposite to his ancestor Narasimha Varman II who built the Kailasa Nathar temple. While Narasimha Varman was a staunch Saivite and called himself 'Siva Chudamani', Nandi Varman was a staunch Vaishnavite. These temples are falling in a straight line facing each other in opposite directions. While the Kailasa Nathar temple is situated in the western end of the town and facing eastwards, the Vaikunda Perumal temple is situated in the eastern end of the town facing westwards. The inner walls of the Vaikunda Perumal temple are full of sculptures depicting various stories related to Vishnu. Not only this, the ancestry of Pallavas, events connected with the rise of Pallava power, raising of the Kailasa Nathar and the Vaikunda Perumal temple and many other historical events have also been visually portrayed. In this respect Vaikunda Perumal temple is advanced compared to the Kailasa Nathar temple. This temple is a protected monument and preserved by the Archaeological Survey of India, Government of India.

Location

Near the town bus stand. The temple's Sannidhi street can be entered from the eastern Raja Veedhi.

Architecture

The first phase of the Dravida architectural style, according to the experts, has reached its climax in Tamil Nadu with the construction of Vaikunda Perumal temple. The Dravida style is characterized by the elevated sanctum sanctorum. This is vertically divided into three parts – basement, walls and parapet. The Vimanas of the Dravida style temples are capped by Gopurams, that is, the pyramidal towers. In Vaikunda Perumal temple this Gopuram is two storeyed and these have hollow interiors. Each one of them have shrine chambers one above the other. Together with the sanctum sanctorum at the ground level, there is a vertical sequence of three shrines. The ground sanctum houses the God in sitting posture; first floor sanctum houses the God in reclining posture; the second floor sanctum houses the God in standing posture.

The Vaikunda Perumal temple is considered as a complete architectural complex. The Vimana, together with the Mandapam>Ardha Mandapam on the west stands freely in the middle of the rectangular enclosure. This enclosure is contained within high walls and entered on the west through a gateway. A drainage moat surrounds the Vimana and the porch. On its western side a solid embankment bridges the moat to the porch entrance. A roofed circumambulatory passage is running along the inner side of the enclosing Prakara wall. Today the temple's rituals are performed following the Vaikhanasa Agama. But the architect who visualized the temple's structure followed the Pancharatra Agama.



Sculpture

The Vimana of the Vaikunda Perumal temple is occupied by the sculpted panels of God Vishnu that illustrate the manifold aspects of him. But the sandstone from which these icons were sculpted has deteriorated over time. The sandstone sculptures of the Vaikunda Perumal temple exhibit the tradition that is native to the Tamil country. The Tamil style can be identified by the vigorous postures of the figures, bold modeling of the bodies and limbs, the delicately worked details of consumes and jewellery etc. The figures fully occupy the area available in each panel. The panels on the wall of the enclosed inner circumambulatory have carvings illustrating the scenes of Pallava genealogy and the royal figures. Both the divine and royal figures are given balanced importance in Vaikunda Perumal sculptures. This is considered as unique in the South Indian temple art. But these panels like that of those in the Vimana have also worn out to considerable extent. While the sculptures on the Vimana walls were inserted after their finishing, the sculptures on the inner circumambulatory wall have been in situ. This temple which combines an exceptional architectural program with an ingenious architectural design reveals the imagination of its patron, Nandivarman Pallavamalla.

Painting

Originally the sculptures in the panels of the inner circumambulatory wall were blasted with lime stone paste and painted over excellently. But these paintings have completely faded out over time.

Hymns

The last of the Azhwars, Tirumangai Azhwar was a contemporary of Pallava King Nandi Varman II. He was also a minor ruler under the imperial umbrella of Nandi Varman II. He ruled from a place called Mangai which is near Nagappattinam in the Thanjavur district. In Periya Thirumozhi (2.9) the Azhwar praises both the God who resides in the Parameswara Vinnagaram and the ruler who built it.

Mythology

(1) Maha Vishnu's Dwarabalakas were born as Pallava and Vallava to king Viroshan. They made Aswamedha Yagam invoking God Vishnu. He gave Darisanam as Parameswaran - Vaikunda Nathan. (2) Bharadwaja Muni had a son through a Gandharva girl. At that time, the Pallavas did not have any male child to carry their lineage. When they prayed to God Vishnu, he gave them this boy. This boy was named as Paramescharan. It is said that he was taught in 18 arts by the God himself. To commemorate this, the Pallava King built this temple in three tiers. The God appeared in the standing pose to teach the boy, in sitting posture to bring up the boy and in reclining posture to give Darisanam to the boy.



Varadaraja Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: Varadarajar; Perundevi Nachiyar

Built By: Krishna Devaraya

Period: 16th Century

Sanctified By: Tirumangai Azhwar

Category: Temple

This is the largest and the most famous Vishnu temple in Kanchipuram. This locality is famously known as Vishnu Kanchi or little Kanchipuram. In ancient times the place was known as Attiyur or Hastigiri and the inscriptions also references to this. This deity of this temple has also been described by Boothathu Azhwar as Attiyuran Pullur Varadhan. The unique feature of this temple is the location of the sanctum on the top of a big terrace on a hill called Hastigiri which is reached by a flight of steps. It appears to be an architectural expression of the Uttaravedi concept of temples. Significantly the deity of the temple is also described as Uttaravedi Azhagiyar.

Location

Little Kanchipuram.

Architecture

The sanctum is rectangular in plan and has a Shala Shikaram (hollow spire). It is known as Punyakoti Vimanam. The first enclosure which is on the hill is named as Vayyamaligai, the second is called Senayarkon Tirumutram (because of the location of the shrine for Senai Nathar), the third is called Yamunai Thuraivar Tirumutram (because of the historic meeting of Saint Yamunacharya with young Ramanuja here) and the last one is known as Azhwar Pradakshinam (because of the location of the shrines of Azhwars here). The unique feature of this temple is the location of the sanctum on the top of a big terrace on a hill called Hastigiri which is reached by a flight of steps. It appears to be an architectural expression of the Uttaravedi concept of temples. Significantly the deity of the temple is also described as Uttaravedi Azhagiyar.

The outermost Prakaram of the temple has two entrances with tall Gopurams - the one on the west datable to the 13th Century and the other on the east was built by Saint Azhagiya Manavala Jeeyar. A number of shrines and Mandapams came up during the Chola period. The shrine for Adishesan (the serpent couch of God Vishnu) was built during 1212 AD by one named Sivaganga. Chola King Vikrama Cholan built the shrine for Karia Manikka Perumal in 1129 AD. Hence this place is called as Vikrama Chola Vinnagar. The temple kitchen was built by Naraloka Veeran, the famous general and minister of Chola King Kulothunga I. The 1000 pillarred Mandapam was built by Kakatiya King Pratapa Rudra Deva in 1316 AD. At the centre of the third Prakaram the Abhisheka Mandapam was built in 1236 AD.

The shrine for Perundevai Thayar was built during the later Chola period some time before 1236 AD as it is mentioned in the records of that date. The Thayar shrine was subsequently reconstructed on a larger scale around 1487 AD. The Mukha Mandapam was constructed some time around 1259 AD. Many beautiful Mandapams like Unjal Mandapam, Vahana Mandapam, Tulabhara Mandapam and Kalyana Mandapam have also been built later. The largest and the most impressive structure is the 100 pillarred Kalyana Mandapam built in the 16th Century.



Sculpture

The 100 pillared Kalyana Mandapam stands on an exquisitely carved platform. It is supported by a closely linked collonade of tall and highly ornamental pillars sculptured into rich and varying patterns like warriors on rearing horses, the rampant Yalis etc. At the entrance are the beautiful sculptures of Rathi and Manmathan mounted on the parrot and swan respectively. There are more than a thousand relief sculptures on the pillars representing scenes from the Ramayanam, the Bhagavatham and other Puranams, Dasavataram and other Vaishnavist themes like the Ramanujar and the Azhwars. Besides these many dance Karanas, motifs and royal portraits can also be seen here.

Painting

Krishna Devarayar's successor Achuta Rayar commissioned some paintings in the Varadaraja Perumal temple. On the walls of the temple, framed in panels, are the 108 Divya Desams of Vaishnavism. In the Andal Unjal Mandapam the ceiling is covered with stories of Krishna from the Bhagavatha Puranam and Hari Vamsam, stories of Gopika Vastraharanam, Kaliya Matdhanam, Vishnu and his consort and so on. Other common themes include the Vijaya Nagar crest of the boar and dagger, Vidhyadhara riders of palanquins composed of feminine figures and similar paintings of elephants and horses composed of female figures, as Vahanas of Rathi and Manmathan, Garuda and Devas deck the corners along with Rathi and Manmathan who are the principal themes in a Mandapam opposite to the Narasimha shrine. In the main shrine of Varadarajar, there is a painting of the God's Garuda Vahanam with large umbrellas on either side representing the famous Garuda Sevai festival.

Inscription

There are more than 300 hundred inscriptions in this temple throwing a light on its history, structural development, festivals and royal patronage. These inscriptions were issued during the reigns of various dynasties such as, Cholas, Telugu Chodas, Kadavarayas, Pandiyas, Cheras, Kakatiyas, Sambhuvarayas, Hoysalas, Vijayanagar and Moguls. The earliest of them is that of Chola King Rajadhi Raja I (1018 - 1054 AD) and the latest one is that of Mogul King Alamgir Pasha (1723 AD).

Hymns

This temple has been sanctified by the hymns of Boodathu Azhwar (hymn no. 95 and 96 of Irandam Tiruvandhadhi), Peyazhwar (hymn no. 26 of Mundram Tiruvandhadhi) and Tirumangai Azhwar (hymn no. 6-10-4 of Periya Tirumozhi, 19 of Tirukkurunthandakam and 15 of Tirunedunthandakam).

Mythology

(1) Once Brahma did penance to have the Darisanam of Vishnu for his heart's content. Knowing his wish, God Vishnu appeared in water form in a pond. Brahma not satisfied with this continued his penance. So, Vishnu appeared as a forest in Naimisaranya. Brahma was not satisfied even with this. So at last God Vishnu emerged out of the sacrificial fire. The God even bore the marks of fire in his face. Brahma fell at the feet of Vishnu. Pleased by the single minded penance of Brahma, God Vishnu granted him many boons. Hence he came to be known as 'Varadhan' (one who giving boons). Every year in the Chitra Pournami day it is believed that Brahma comes at midnight to worship Vishnu.

(2) The elephant Gajendran worshipped Vishnu here; hence it came to be called as Hastigiri. 'Hasti' in Sanskrit means elephant.

(3) Some ill minded scholars who were jealous of Saint Vedanta Desikar's fame diverted one poor young man to him to become wealthy. That poor man approached Desikar and asked for money. Desikar told that he was also poor like him. That poor man told that learned scholars had assured him of all wealth if



he approach Desikar. Then it would come true replied Desikar and took him to the Thayar Sannidhi in Varadharajar temple. He sang the Sri Sthuthi there. Pleased with this recital the Goddess showered gold coins.

Events

In this temple the legendary Saint Tirukkachi Nambigal served God in the sanctum sanctorum by fanning cool air to him. Young Ramanujar became his disciple and received instructions from God through Nambigal regarding the basic tenets of Vaishnavism. Ramanujar daily drew water from the temple well for the sacred bath of the God. This service is still known as Tirtha Karyam. It is only in this temple the aged Yamunacharya met young Ramanuja and selected him as the future proponent of Vaishnavism.

Festivals

Vaikasi Brahmotsavam

Pari Vettai

Theppa Utsavam



Vedanta Desikar Birthplace

Religion: Vaishnavism

Vedanta Desikar was a native of Kanchipuram. He was born in a small village called Thoopul. It is within the limits of the Kanchipuram municipality area. During the period of Azhwars this place was called as Tiruthanka - a Divya Desam having Vilakkoli Perumal temple. In the vicinity of this temple Vedanta Desikar's temple, birthplace and the Parakala mutt are situated. The saint's birthplace is adjacent to his temple. A stone inscription at its entrance mentions this as the 'Avatara Sthalam (birthplace) of Vedanta Desikar. Generally visitors are not allowed inside.

Location

Near the Vilakkoli Perumal temple



Vedanta Desikar temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: Swami Vedanta Desikar

Period: 14th Century

Category: Temple

This temple has been built adjacent to the Vilakkoli Perumal temple in Thoopul area of Kanchipuram town. In the sanctum an idol of Vedanta Desikar is seen with his right hand in the Abhaya Hasta Mudra, symbolizing an attitude of protection. He is found to be holding a manuscript in his left hand. According to the traditional account, the Vedanta Desikar temple was built by his son named Nayinar Varadachariar alias Kumara Varadacharya. Worship in this temple is offered according to the tenets of the Vaikhanasa Agama. This temple is called as 'Desikar Koil' by the local people who frequently visit it with immense devotion. Vedanta Desikar was a great devotee of Varadaraja Perumal.

He composed many literary works in praise of Varadarajar. The most famous among them is Varadaraja Panchashat – consisting fifty verses in Sanskrit. In recognition of the staunch devotion of Desikar, God Varadarajar makes periodic visits to this temple during various festival occasions. During the famous ten day Vaikasi Brahmothsavam celebrations (May-June), Varadaraja Perumal visits the Vedanta Desikar temple and stays here for three days. On the third day Garuda Seva procession (very famous) Varadarajar presents his Malai (garland) to his devotee, Desikar. This is repeated during the fifth day Mohini Avatara festival and the ninth day Punyakoti-vimana procession. Apart from the May month Brahmothsavam festival, Varadar pays visit to Desikar temple on other occasions also. Chitra Pournami day is one such occasion.

On the twelfth day after Vaikunta Ekadasi, during the Anushtanakulam festival, Varadar with his consorts Sri Devi and Bhu Devi (Ubhaya Nachiyar) on the occasion of goes to the nearby tiny village of Sevelimedu village (about three kilometers away from Kanchipuram). In this village there is also a shrine of Ramanujar and an ancient well from which this great preceptor brought water every day for the Tirumanjanam (holy bath) of Varadaraja Perumal. On the way back from Sevelimedu they halt for a while at the temple of Desikar. Thus, the frequent mutual visits of Lord Varadaraja and Sri Vedanta Desika reflect the close affinity between them. The periodic visit of the God also reflects the sanctity of the temple.

Location

Near Vilakkoli Perumal temple.

Painting

The inner walls of the temple are full of beautiful paintings visually depicting the complete life history Vedanta Desikar.



Vilankoli Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: God - Deepa Prakasar; Goddess - Marakatha Valli

Category: Temple

Location

This temple is situated in the southern part of Kanchipuram, opposite to Keerai Mandapam bus stop. This place is also called as Thoopul village.

Painting

In the walls of the Vedanta Desikar Sannidhi paintings can be seen which depict the happenings in the life of Desikar.

Inscription

Three inscriptions have been found inside this temple. They contain details about the land grants made to this temple. The inscription at the left of the Sannidhi's entrance reveals the fact that Saint Azhagiya Manavala Jeeyar had built the beautiful Mandapam inside the temple

Hymns

This temple is sanctified by the hymns of Nammazhwar (26th song of Tiruviruttam) and Tirumangai Azhwar (10-1-2 song of Periya Tirumozhi and 14th song of Tirunedunthandakam)

Mythology

Once a dispute arose between Goddess Lakshmi (Wife of God Vishnu) and Saraswati (Wife of God Brahma) as to who was superior. Indira, the leader of Devaloham took the side of Lakshmi. Saraswati asked her husband Brahma to solve the dispute. He too answered in favor of Lakhmi. Due to this Saraswati left Brahma. After sometime, Brahma performed Aswamedha Yagam without his consort Saraswati, in praise of Vishnu. Already angered Saraswati tried to disturb the Yagam. With the help of Asuras she fully concealed the glow of sun and moon, so darkness descended on earth. Seeing this, Vishnu came to Brahma's help. Saraswati created a big fireball to destroy the Yagam. Vishnu held the fireball in his hand and illuminated the Yagasalai. Hence he is called as Deepa Prakasar (illuminator). Accepting her failure, Saraswati turned herself into water and cooled the hands of Vishnu. It also symbolises that God Vishnu not only illuminated the world, but also removed ignorance and instilled knowledge in the minds of people.

Festivals

Sathumurai



Yathothkari Perumal Temple

Religion: Vaishnavism

Deity: Yathokthakari Perumal and Komalavalli Thayar

Period: 11th Century

Sanctified By: Poigai Azhwar

Category: Temple

This temple is a Divya Desam and probably the oldest of all temples in Kanchipuram. Because it is mentioned in the ancient Sangam literary work 'Perumpanatruppadai'. So this temple must be more than 2000 years old. An interesting story is related to this temple in which the deity of this temple followed the instructions of Tirumazhisai Azhwar and acted according to it. So the deity Vishnu is known as 'Sonna Vannam Seidha Perumal' in Tamil or 'Yathokthakari Perumal' in Sanskrit. This temple is the birth place of the first Azhwar named Poigai Azhwar.

Location

Opposite to Rangasamy Kulam in Little Kanchipuram.

Architecture

This is a west facing temple. There is a Rajagopuram at the entrance. Once we enter the temple, there is a Bali Peetam, to the east of it is Dvaja Sthampam and to its east lie the Garudan Sannidhi facing the Moola Sthanam or the sanctum sanctorum. The sanctum of this temple along with that of Pandva Thoodhu Perumal temple and the Yathokthakari Perumal temple is large, high and rectangular in plan to accommodate the huge figures inside. It has a massive Shala Shikara (hollow spire). There is inner circumambulatory path around the sanctum. Thayar, Vishvaksena and Ramar Sannidhis can be seen. In the same Sannidhi Ramanujar, Pillai Lokacharyar and Manavala Mamunigal idols can be seen.

Sculpture

The deity inside the sanctum is in reclining position on the Adishesan. He is putting his head above the left hand, lies south to north and faces the west direction.

Inscription

There are 14 inscriptions inside this temple. One of it mentions the 127 measure gold gifted to this temple. Three inscriptions belong to the period of Chola King Kulothungan III. In them the deity is referred to as 'Kacchipedu Anantha Sayana Perumal Paramaswami' and 'Tiruvekka Anai Kidantha Paramaswami'. Moreover the temple inscriptions also mention that the three temples - Yathokthakari Perumal temple, Ashtabhujam Perumal temple and Vilakkoli Perumal temple - are situated in the same village name 'Tiruthanka'. The details regarding gifting of Varanavasi village to this temple have also been mentioned.

Hymns

Poigai Azhwar (hymn no.77 of Mudhal Tiruvandhadhi), Peyazhwar (hymns no. 26, 62, 64 and 76 of Mundram Tiruvandhadhi), Tirumazhisai Azhwar (hymn no. 26 of Tiruvirutham and hymn no. 36 of Naanmugan Tiruvandhadhi) Nammazhwar and Tirumangai Azhwar have sanctified this temple.

Mythology

(1) Once Brahma did a Yagnam in praise of God Vishnu. As his wife Saraswati was not invited for this event she got angry and decided to disturb the Yagna. She turned into the river Vegavati and flowed fast



towards the Yagnam. God Vishnu in order to protect the Yagnam, slept along the path of the river. So river Vegavati changed its path and flowed southwards. (2)



JAINISM SPOTS

Arpakkam - Adi Battarakar Jain Temple

Religion: Jainism

Deity: Adhi Nathar

Period: 10th Century

Category: Temple

Arpakkam was one of the important Jain centres in Thondai Mandalam. Even today, Jains assemble here in large numbers every year during specific occasions. This temple was built for Rishabha Deva - the first of the 24 Tirthankars. Rishabha Deva is also known by names such as, Adhi Natha, Adhi Deva and Adhi Bhattaraka. This temple in Arpakkam village is called as Adhi Bhattaraka Jain temple. Tirthankars means 'those who have shown the way to salvation from the river of births and deaths. The literal meaning of Tirthankar is 'ford-builder'. Jains compare the process of becoming a pure soul to crossing a swift river, an endeavour requiring patience and care. A ford-builder has already crossed the river and can therefore guide others. The main deity 'Adhi Natha' is seen in Yogasana posture inside the sanctum.

Location

Arpakkam village is at a distance of 15 kms to south of Kanchipuram. One has to take the eastern route (locally called as 'Keel road') to Uttiramerur from Kanchipuram. By car, this village can be reached with in 15 to 20 minutes of travel. After reaching the Arpakkam junction (called Arpakkam Mandapam), one has to take left to enter into the village. Road conditions are good.

Inscription

An inscription of 10th Century AD is found inside this temple. It refers to tax free land and gold grants to the temple. Land grants made to Jain temples were usually termed as 'Pallichandam' in the inscriptions.



Chandra Prabha Jain Temple

Religion: Jainism

Timing: 8 AM to 11 AM.

Deity: Eighth Tirthankar Chandra Prabhu Swami

Built By: Narasimha Varman II

Period: 8th Century

Category: Temple

This temple was constructed in reverence of the Eighth Tirthankara Chandra Prabha. This temple along with the adjacent Trilokya Nathar temple was the standing testimony of the glory of Jainism in Kanchi. In the 11th Century during the reign of Rajendra Chola this temple is said to have received donations. But the original sources containing the information are lost.

Location

Tirupparuthikkundram Village. Near the Kanchipuram Collectorate, the road leading to this village can be easily spotted. It is at a distance of 2 kilometers from this landmark.

Architecture

Even though the construction of this temple is dated back to Pallava period, it no longer exhibits the Pallava architecture. This temple is neither big nor small, but has modest proportions. It has a shrine and small Mandapam in front of it. This shrine was later closed for unknown reasons. The first floor was made a shrine and it houses the image of Tirthankara Chandra Prabha. Subsequent repairs and renovations changed the original style of its architecture. Now it somewhat looks like a modern structure. But Yali (mythical figure having the head of a lion, tusks of an elephant and the tail of a serpent) images at the cardinals of the shrine are reminiscent of the style of Narasimha Varman II.

Mythology

Chandraprabha was the eighth Jain Tirthankar of the present age Avasarpini – as per the Jain belief. Chandraprabha (also known as Chandraprabhu Swami) was born to King Mahasen Raja and Queen Lakshmana Devi at Chandrapuri in the Ikshvaku clan. Spending a lifetime as a God in Anuttar Vijay dimension he descended into the womb of his Queen Lakshmana. During her pregnancy, one day the queen was looking at the splendors of glowing full-moon. All of a sudden she had a strange desire to drink the glowing streak of moon light. The king cleverly managed to satisfy this strange desire of a pregnant mother. On the thirteenth day of the dark half of the month of Paush the queen gave birth to a healthy son who was fair and glowing like the moon. He was named Chandraprabha (glow of the moon).

Chandraprabha was apathetic towards the mundane pleasures and princely grandeur. After he ascended the throne his reign was short lived. He became an ascetic in the prime of his youth and just after three months of acute spiritual practices he became an omniscient. For a considerably long period he continued to enlighten the people and propagate the true religion. When his end approached he went to Sammetshikhar and after a month of long fast and meditation attained Nirvana. According to Jain beliefs, he became a Siddha, a liberated soul which has destroyed all of its Karma.



Trilokya Natha Jinaswamy Temple

Religion: Jainism

Timing: 8 AM to 11 AM ; 4 PM to 6 PM.

Deity: Mahavirar, Pushpa Danthar and Dharma Devi.

Built By: Kulothungan I

Period: 11th Century

Category: Temple

In the four fold classification along the religious lines, Kanchipuram since historical times had been demarcated into Shiva Kanchi, Vishnu Kanchi, Jina Kanchi and Buddha Kanchi. The Tirupparuthikkundram village in the outskirts of Kanchipuram township with its Trilokya Nathar Jain temple and the adjacent Chandra Prabha Jain temple is famously called as 'Jina Kanchi'. In this Jina Kanchi, since 6th Century AD, a lineage of highly learned Jain scholars and monks lived for centuries and preached the path of Jainism. This is one of the four Jain Vidhya Sthanams in India. First built during the time of Pallava King Simha Varman (556 AD), the temple was gradually expanded during the later regimes of Cholas and Vijaya Nagar rulers.

Location

From the Kanchi Collectorate the Tirupparuthikkundram village is at a distance of 2 kilometers westwards.

Architecture

The Trilokya Nathar temple consists of two groups of sanctum sanctorums. Each group has three sanctum sanctorums. The first group houses the sacred idols of Mahavirar (twenty fourth Tirthankarar), Pushpa Danthar (ninth Tirthankarar) and Dharma Devi. The second group houses the sacred idols of Padma Prabha (sixth Tirthankarar), Vasupujyar (twelfth Tirthankarar) and Parshvanathar (twenty third Tirthankarar).

The first group is called as Trilokya Nathar Temple and the second group is called as Trikooda Basti. 'Tri' in Sanskrit means 'three'. Each group has separate Mandapam>Ardha Mandapam and Mukha Mandapam. But there is common Mandapam>Maha Mandapam, Bali Peetam and Mana Sthambam. There are also separate shrines for Brahma Deva and Rishabha Nathar (first Tirthankarar). The Munivasa Mandapam (space for five monks) and a warehouse for grains are also found inside the temple. The temple has a Gopuram at the entrance for the temple in the eastern side. This Gopuram has three floors.

The sanctum sanctorum housing the idol of Mahavira and the adjoining Mandapam>Ardha Mandapam and Mukha Mandapam are the ancient ones. At first during the reign of Pallava King Simha Varman (556 AD) the temple was built only for Mahavira. Hence it was then called as 'Vardhadmaneeswaram'. As the temple was initially built out of bricks, it was damaged as years lapsed. Later the Chola King Kulothunga I (1070 - 1120 AD) rebuilt the temple. The sanctum sanctorum has Gaja Brishta (back of an elephant) structure. It has been built out of bricks and lime stone. But the Mandapam>Ardha Mandapam has granite foundation and sandstone roof. In its present status the entire temple structure is standing as the monument of Chola architecture. Before the Mukha Mandapams of the Trilokya Nathar shrine and the Trikooda Basti a 61 feet long Mandapam>Maha Mandapam has been built. It is famously called as



'Sangeetha Mandapam'. It has 24 pillars of Vijaya Nagar style. In the year 1387 AD, Irugappa, the minister in the court of Vijaya Nagar King Bukka II, had built it. Pushpa Sena, the preceptor of Minister Irugappa, who also headed the Jain Mutt at that time was instrumental in building this structure. In this Mandapam many musical concerts were held at that time. At the insistence of Pushpa Sena the Vijaya Nagar Minister also made liberal grants for the temple.

Sculpture

The temple has the idols of the Brahma Deva, Dharma Devi and of the Tirthankaras Rishabha Nathar (first), Padma Prabha (sixth), Pushpa Danthar ninth), Vasupujyar (twelfth), Parshvanathar twenty third) and Mahavirar (twenty fourth). In one of the pillars of the Sangeetha Mandapam the figure of Vijaya Nagar Minister Irugappa has been carved out.

Painting

In the ceiling of the Sangeetha Mandapam lots of painting works can be seen. Even though most of the 14th Century paintings belonging to the Vijaya Nagar period paintings have disappeared due to the ravages of time. So during the reign of Nayakas in the 17th Century painting works were carried out in the same ceiling depicting the incidences related to the life of Rishabha Nathar, Nemi Nathar, Mahavirar and Dharma Devi. So there are two layers of paintings belonging to two different periods. Other Nayaka period paintings such as Little Krishna lifting the Govardhana hill, killing the snake Kalinga, elephant Asura and Kamsa also deserve attention. Short label instructions in Tamil narrating these events are also found below the paintings.

Inscription

The famous Pallan Koil copper plate inscription is the earliest epigraphical record related to the Jain temple in Tirupparuthikkundram. The Pallava King Simha Varman (556 AD) had recorded that he granted the village Amansekkai in Perunagar and some lands in Tamar village to the reputed Jain Monk Vajra Nandi of Nandi Sangha at Vardhamaneeswaram for conducting the worship of Lord Jina (Mahavira). The copper plate refers to Tirupparuthikkundram as a sacred place of Mahavira. Perunagar and Tamar (Damal) are two important places retaining their ancient names even today in the Kanchipuram district. From the inscription we also know about the existence of Nandi Sanga in this place at that time.

The Jaina recluses formed themselves into various Sanghas for the propagation of Jainism. The Digambara Jains of South India had four such Sanghas namely, Nandi Sangha, Sena Sangha, Deva Sangha and Simha Sanga. Among them the Nandi Sangha was famous in Tamil Nadu. Apart from this, many Chola and Vijaya Nagar period inscriptions have been found inside the temple premises. The Chola inscriptions mainly refer to the grant of lands to the temple as Pallichandam. During the reign of Chola King Kulothunga I (1116 AD), the Jain Monks in this village have purchased 3000 Kuzhi land for the purpose of digging a channel for irrigation purposes. In the 14 Century the Gopuram of this temple was built by Jain Monks Mallisena Vamanasuri and his disciple Pushpasena Vamanacharya. Salutations are paid to these two sages in the epigraphical records of the temple who headed the Jain Mutt there.



BUDDHISM SPOTS

Buddha Statue - Subbaraya Mudaliar School Ground

Religion: Buddhism

This is massive lithic structure. The Buddha seen here is in Yoga Mudra pose. How the statue came into school premises is not known.

Location

Behind SSKV Higher Secondary School for Girls



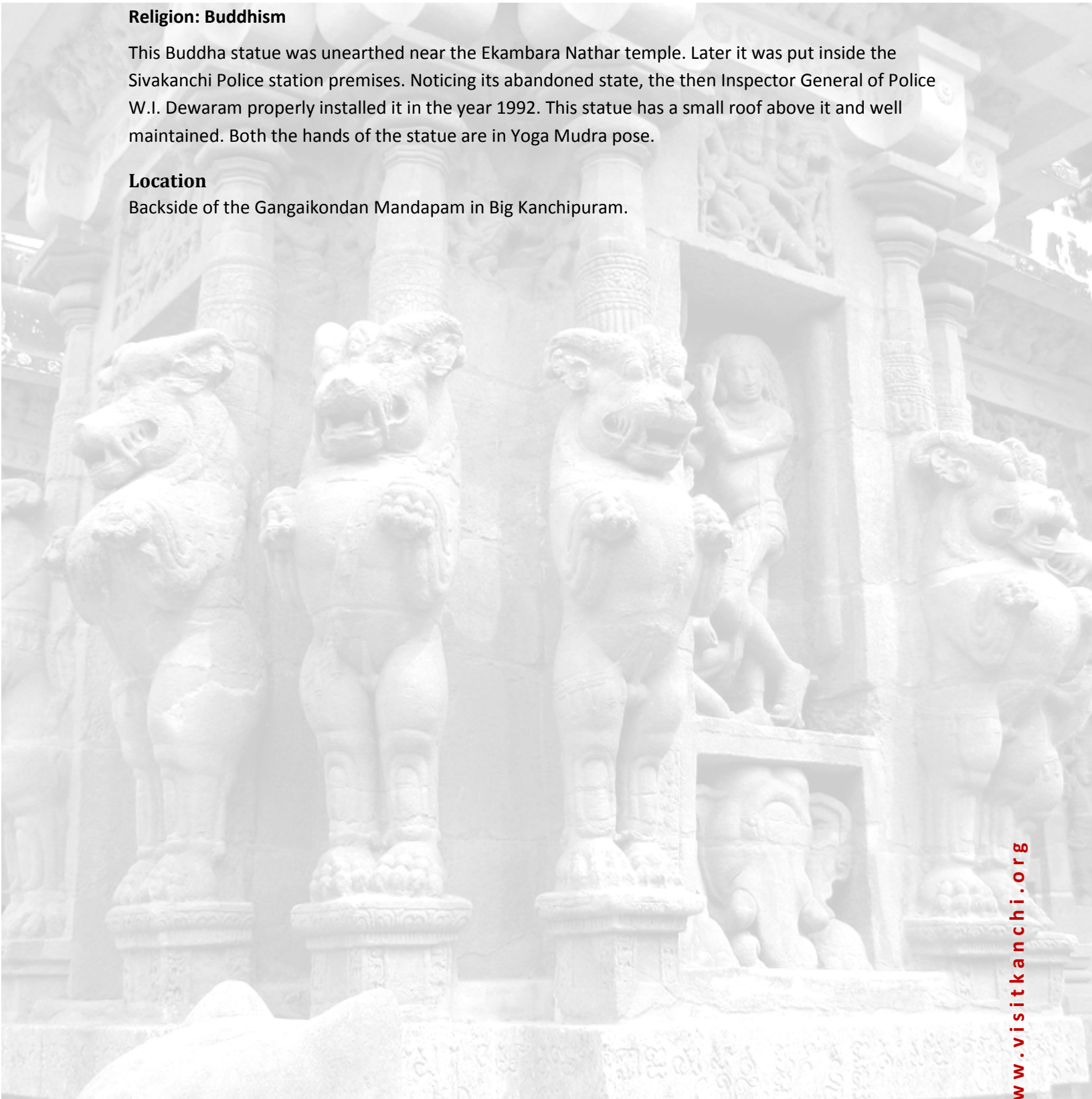
Buddha Statue in Sivakanchi Police Station Premise

Religion: Buddhism

This Buddha statue was unearthed near the Ekambara Nathar temple. Later it was put inside the Sivakanchi Police station premises. Noticing its abandoned state, the then Inspector General of Police W.I. Dewaram properly installed it in the year 1992. This statue has a small roof above it and well maintained. Both the hands of the statue are in Yoga Mudra pose.

Location

Backside of the Gangaikondan Mandapam in Big Kanchipuram.



Buddha Statues in Karukkinil Amarndha Amman Temple

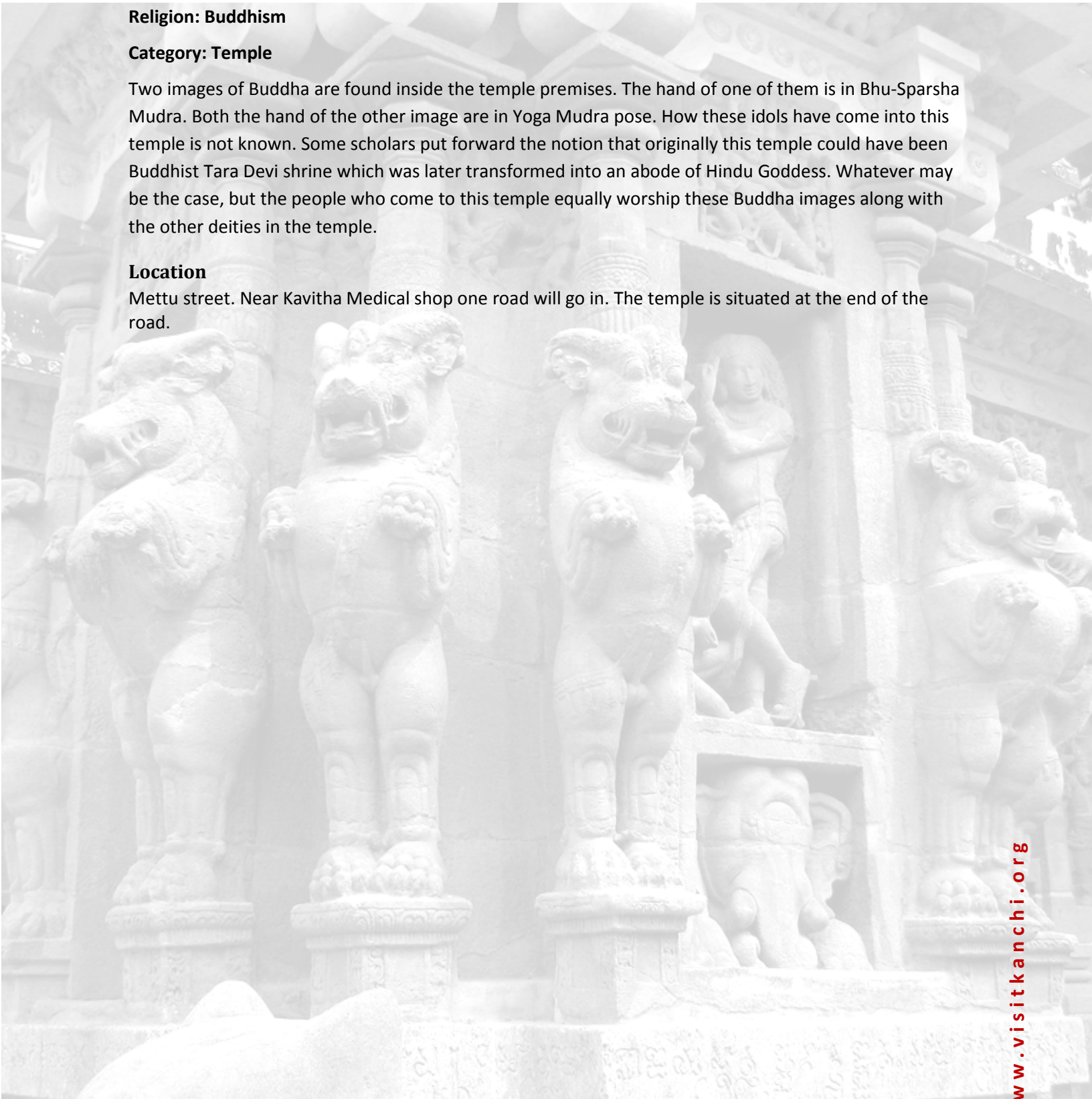
Religion: Buddhism

Category: Temple

Two images of Buddha are found inside the temple premises. The hand of one of them is in Bhu-Sparsha Mudra. Both the hand of the other image are in Yoga Mudra pose. How these idols have come into this temple is not known. Some scholars put forward the notion that originally this temple could have been Buddhist Tara Devi shrine which was later transformed into an abode of Hindu Goddess. Whatever may be the case, but the people who come to this temple equally worship these Buddha images along with the other deities in the temple.

Location

Mettu street. Near Kavitha Medical shop one road will go in. The temple is situated at the end of the road.



Buddhist Shrine - Bodhi Nagar

Religion: Buddhism

Deity: Buddha

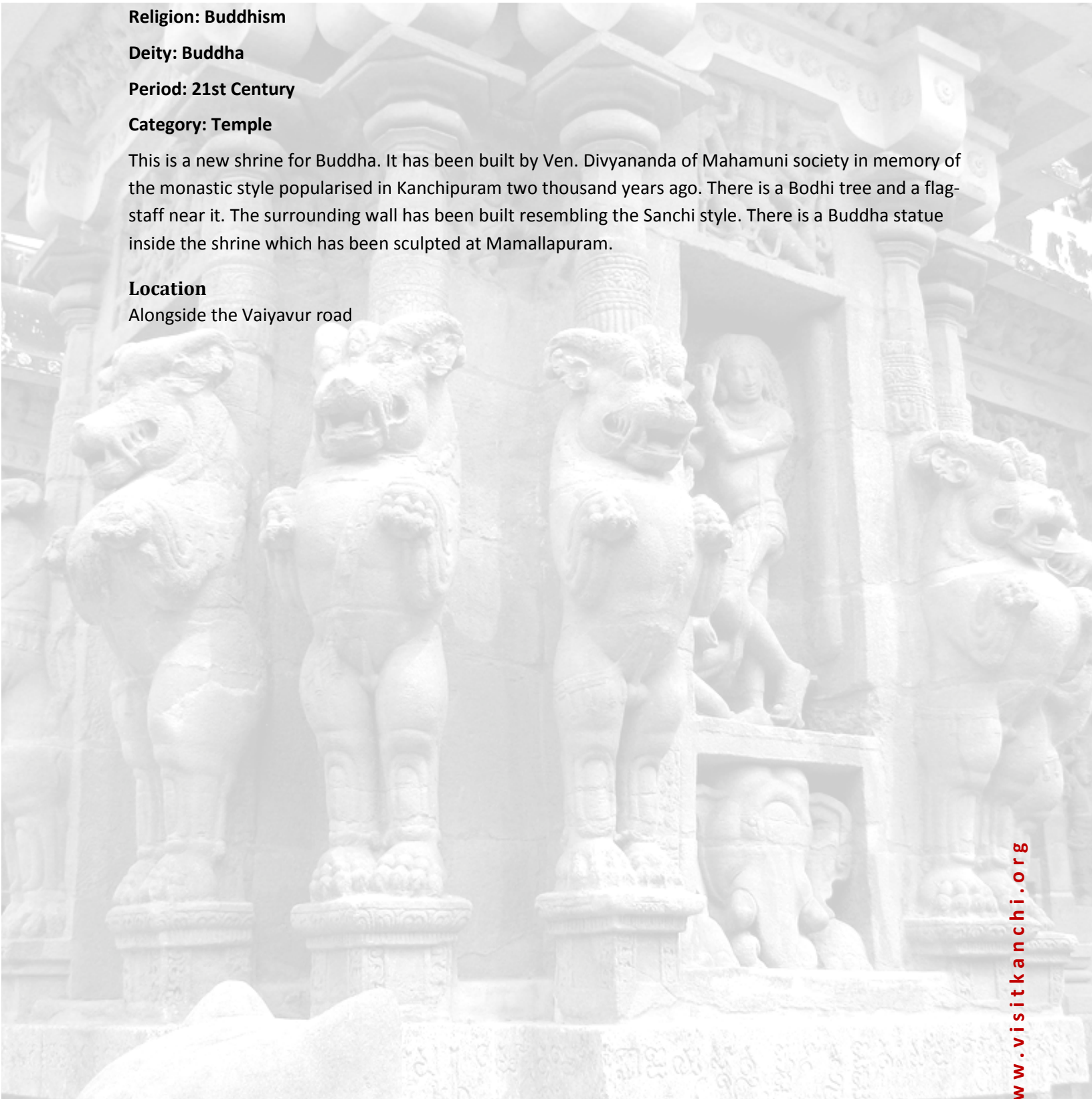
Period: 21st Century

Category: Temple

This is a new shrine for Buddha. It has been built by Ven. Divyananda of Mahamuni society in memory of the monastic style popularised in Kanchipuram two thousand years ago. There is a Bodhi tree and a flag-staff near it. The surrounding wall has been built resembling the Sanchi style. There is a Buddha statue inside the shrine which has been sculpted at Mamallapuram.

Location

Alongside the Vaiyavur road



Buddhist Shrine - Konerippakkam

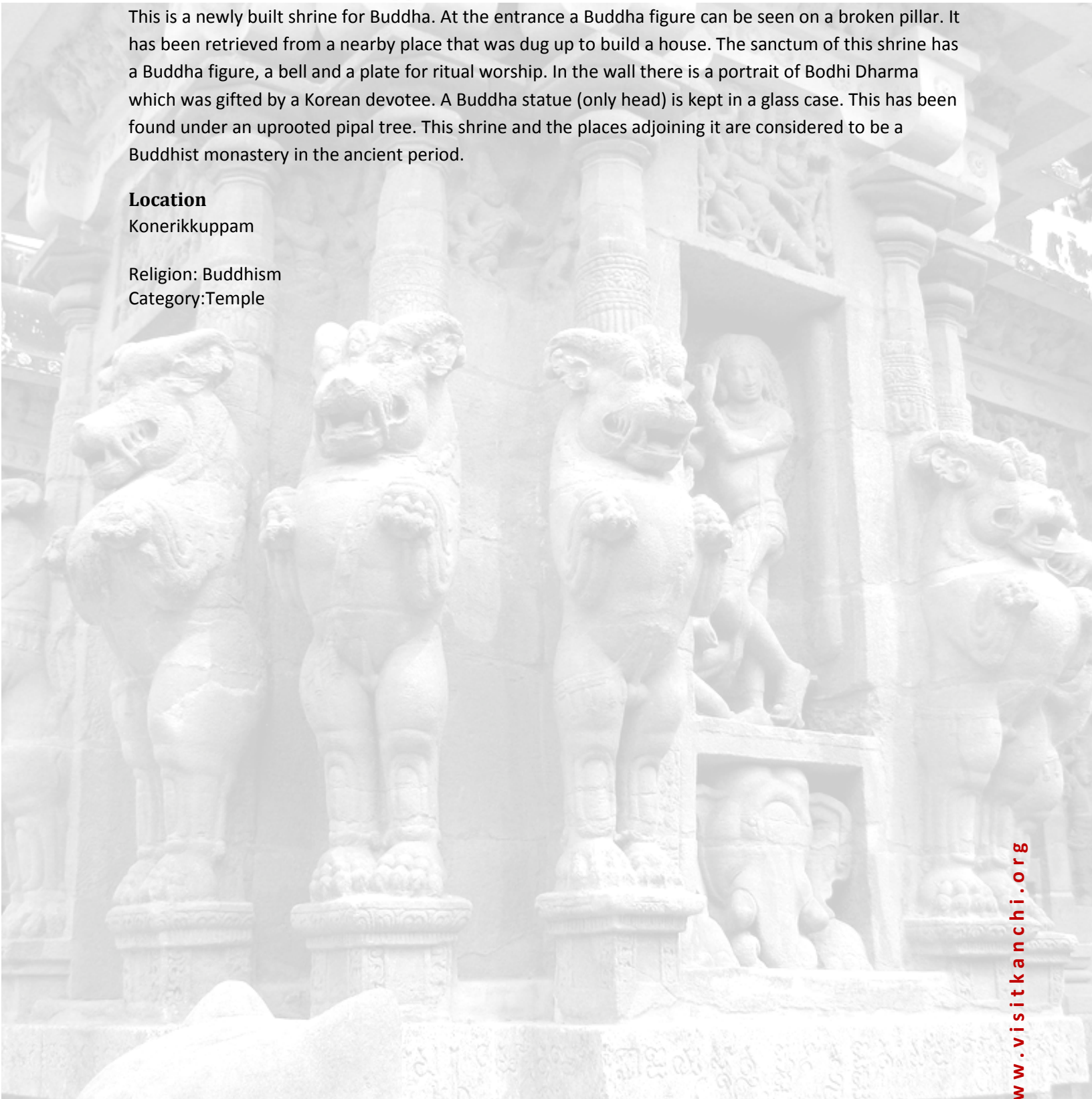
This is a newly built shrine for Buddha. At the entrance a Buddha figure can be seen on a broken pillar. It has been retrieved from a nearby place that was dug up to build a house. The sanctum of this shrine has a Buddha figure, a bell and a plate for ritual worship. In the wall there is a portrait of Bodhi Dharma which was gifted by a Korean devotee. A Buddha statue (only head) is kept in a glass case. This has been found under an uprooted pipal tree. This shrine and the places adjoining it are considered to be a Buddhist monastery in the ancient period.

Location

Konerikkuppam

Religion: Buddhism

Category: Temple



ISLAM SPOTS

Hameed Owliya Dargah

Religion: Islam

Period: 18th Century

Category: Dargah

Dargahs are shrines built over the tombs of revered Islamic Saints called as Owliyas or Oliyullahs. Dargahs exhibit the intricacies of Islamic architecture. At the ground they are square shaped. Above it minars and domes will be built. The lintels and carbels were designed as curvatures - the mark of the Islamic architectural style. The Dargah in Kanchipuram has been built above the grave of the Islamic Saint Hazrat Syed Shah Hameed Owliya Badhusha. The saint is considered to have lived before 650 years. He came to Kanchipuram and settled here continuing his religious service. He was revered by all sections of the people here as they considered him to be possessing divine grace. Even today, irrespective of religion, caste and other barriers people used to come here and meditate seeking peace and solution to their personal problems. They feel relieved and later come here present Dosas as their Kanikkai.

This south facing Dargah is situated in broad courtyard. It has two gates in the eastern and western sides. There is a beautiful front entrance at the northern Raja Veedhi. This is a separate structure leading a person along the pathway to the Dargah. There is many pillared front portion. Once we enter in to the Dargah we can see the main tomb and two other tombs on both sides of it. The majestic big dome is splendorous if one look at it from inside or outside the Dargah. It is considered to have built during the rule of Nawabs of Arcot in the early years of 18th Century AD.

Location

Near Sankara Mutt. Travel along the northern Raja Veedhi towards east and take left before the Darling Bakery.



Nawab Sathathullah Khan Mosque

Religion: Islam

Period: 18th Century

Category: Mosque

This mosque is named after Nawab Sathathullah Khan, the third Nawab of Carnatic. His original name was Mohammed Said. The Nawabs of Carnatic ruled the region as the representatives of Moghul emperor. As they made Arcot town as their headquarters they were also known as Arcot Nawabs. Acknowledging the efficiency and administrative capabilities of Mohammed Said, Moghul emperor Aurangazeb conferred on him titles such as, Sathathullah Khan and Kibhayat Khan. The mosque in his in Kanchipuram is situated near the Vaikunda Perumal temple. Both the Hindu shrine and the Islamic shrine share the same tank and compound. This is a very good example of communal harmony in the state of Tamil Nadu and especially in Kanchipuram.

Location

Near Vaikunda Perumal temple



Sunnath Jamath Jummah Masjid

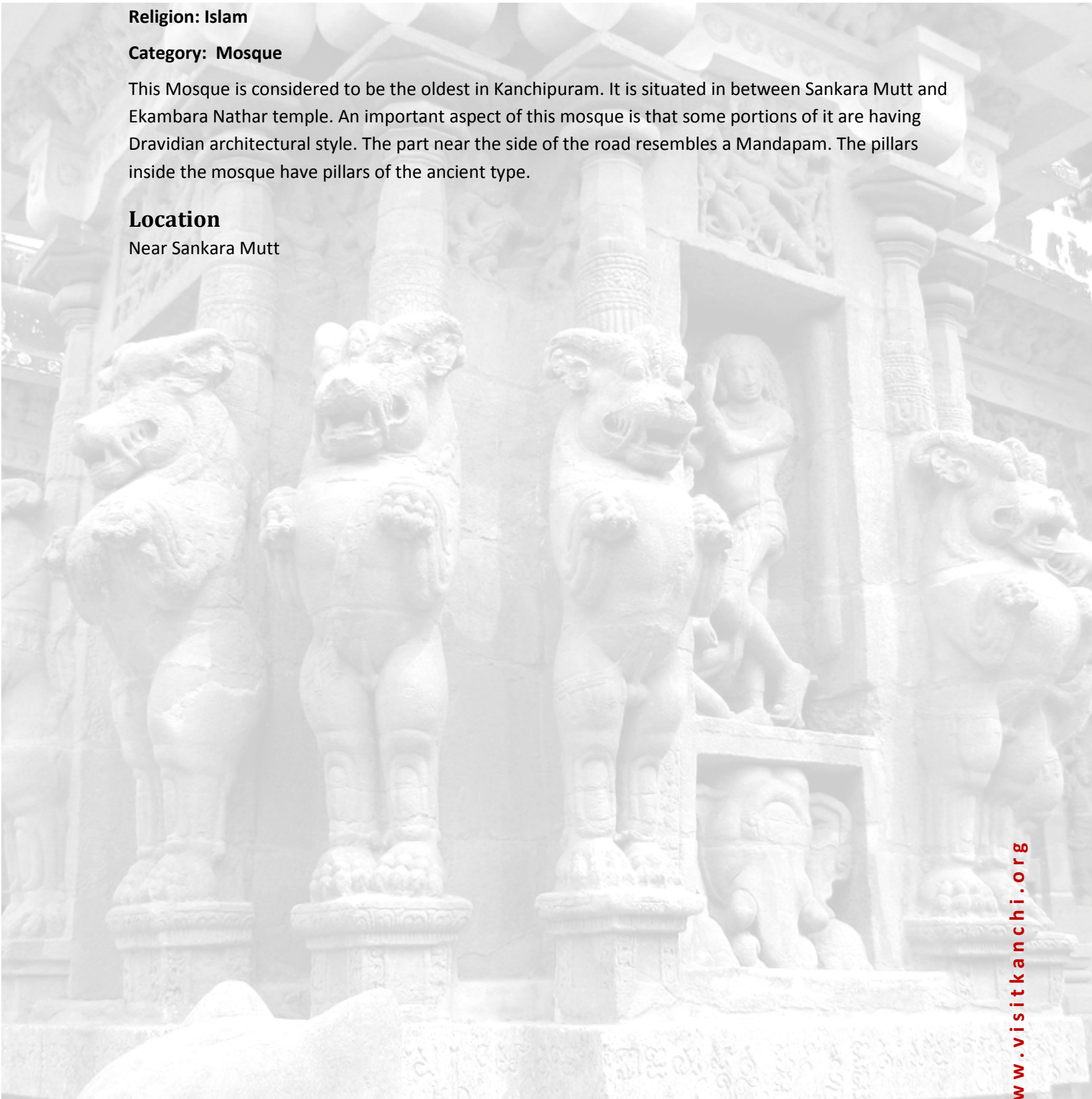
Religion: Islam

Category: Mosque

This Mosque is considered to be the oldest in Kanchipuram. It is situated in between Sankara Mutt and Ekambara Nathar temple. An important aspect of this mosque is that some portions of it are having Dravidian architectural style. The part near the side of the road resembles a Mandapam. The pillars inside the mosque have pillars of the ancient type.

Location

Near Sankara Mutt



OTHER SPOTS

Balasaraswati Arangetram Temple

Deity: Amanaskshi Amman

Category: Temple

According to the oral history of the temple, mother Amanakshi was a native of Puttur town in Andhra Pradesh. Musicians and dancers of Kanchipuram used to go to Puttur every year to perform during the annual temple festival there. Attracted by their art, Amanakshi followed the music troupe to Kanchipuram. She resided in the place where the temple stands now. The entire street was always busy with music performances and discussions. Amanakshi lived and died at this place in Kanchipuram. Knowing her serious quest for music, the families of artists residing in this area, considered her a goddess and built the present temple for her.

In those days the musicians of Kanchipuram used to worship her every year in a musical way by organising performances in temple premises. It was in this small temple the debut performance of great Bharatanatyam exponent Balasaraswati - just seven years old then - occurred in the year 1927. Later on the greatness of her art took her to many countries around the world. But Amanakshi temple will be remembered for ever in history as the starting point of Balasaraswati's dance journey. News spread in Kanchi about the dance Arangetram of Veenai Dhanammal's granddaughter Balasaraswati. Veenai Dhanammal was the grand old lady of Carnatic music and highly respected by all.

In the evening the temple's premises was fully occupied by artists and well wishers. 'Laya wizard' Kanchipuram Naina Pillai was also present among the audience. Balasaraswati's sisters Brinda and Mukta were studying classical music under him then. A small platform inside the temple was used as a stage - it can be seen even now. Balasaraswati performed well and got applause from all, including many 'Besh, Besh' from Naina Pillai. At the end of the performance Naina Pillai presented a Sruti box to Balasaraswati. Later in the 1950's when Balasaraswati received honors from the President of India she narrated to her friend about the debut in Kanchipuram and the first prize she got from Naina Pillai.

Location

Senkashuneer Odai street (Northern Rajaveedhi). Opposite to PTVS higher secondary school.



Koorathazwar Sannidhi

When Koorathazwar left his native village Kooram for Kanchipuram, he is said to have resided in this place. This is actually a Sannidhi that comes under the control of Vardaraja Perumal temple. It is situated in the midst of a quiet and beautiful garden.

Location

Little Kanchipuram. This temple is situated in the left side while approaching Varadarajar temple from Rangasamy Kulam.



Muktheeswarar Temple

Deity: Mutheesar

Category: Temple

Out of the 63 Nayanmars, three Nayanmars were born or lived at Kanchi. They were Tirukkuriippu Thondar, Sakkiya Nayanar and Iyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar. Three temples in Kanchi are also linked with the life and mission of these Nayanmars. The Muktheeswarar temple is revered by people of Kanchi to be the place where Tirukkuriippu Thondar attained Mukthi.

Location

Gandhi road. Situated in the opposite side of Hotel Saravana Bhavan there.

Mythology

The Kasyapa Munivar had two wives namely Kathuru and Subarunai. Once a dispute arose between them regarding who was more beautiful. The brought the issue to their husband. Kasyapa Munivar judged in favor of Kathuru. As per the conditions accepted before, one who was defeated will be put in to the prison. Subarunai begged Kathuru to release her from jail. Kathuru put the condition that if Subarunai bring nectar vessel from the heaven she will release her. Desperate Subarunai immersed in meditation of Kanchi Mutheesar (God Shiva) seeking solution to her problem.

Time passed and she gave birth to Garudan due to the graciousness of Kasyapa Munivar. Garudan (Eagle) was the king of birds. The child grew and understood the sorrow of its mother. Garudan flew to heaven took the nectar vessel and defeated Indra and other Gods who tried to snatch the vessel from him. Even God Vishnu could not overpower him. He appreciated Garudan and told him to ask any boon from him. The proud Garudan refused and in turn told Vishnu that he will grant any boon he might wish. Vishnu utilised this opportunity and demanded that Garudan had to be his Vahanam (vehicle) forever. There was no other way, Garudan offered to serve God Vishnu as his vehicle. But he took permission from Vishnu to meet his mother. Garudan gave the nectar vessel and released his mother from jail. Then straight away he went out Kanchi and praised in the temple of Mutheesar installing a Lingam in his name "Garudesar". This Lingam can be seen inside this temple. All the snakes, however dreadful they may be, are very afraid of this Garudesar and do not harm the devotees of it.

Events

This is the place where Tirukkuriippu Thonda Nayanar attained Mukthi.



Naina Pillai Birthplace

Category: House

In olden days this place was known as 'Mettu Kamakshi house'. Mettu Kamakshi Ammal had three daughters namely, Dhanakoti Ammal, Kamakshi Ammal and Palani Ammal. Naina Pillai was born to Kamakshi Ammal. Other two daughters were issueless so Naina Pillai was the only child in the house. He was the darling of all the three daughters. So they fondly called him 'Naina' (meaning 'dad'). Theirs was a music family and they had a proud lineage of musicians. But their young son Naina, upto to his teens did not have any interest in music. In some mystic circumstances Naina was imbued with the spirit of music by an ascetic. Then on music became the single motive of pursuit of Naina Pillai. He reached heights no other vocalist reached till now. He had lot of disciples. In this respect also Naina Pillai is not surpassed by any one till now. Most of the disciples stayed in his house till they reached expertise in the art. He provided food and clothing free of cost to all of them. All day from dawn till mid night music ringed in this house. Doyens in the field of music of that time frequently visited his house any learnt new things from him. If they had anything new to offer he never hesitated to learn from them. In this very house Naina Pillai lived from his birth to death at an early age of 45. In memory of his service to music the street in which he lived was named after him.

Location

Sangeetha Vidwan Naina Pillai street. Situated on the way from Kachapeswarar temple to Kailasa Nathar temple.

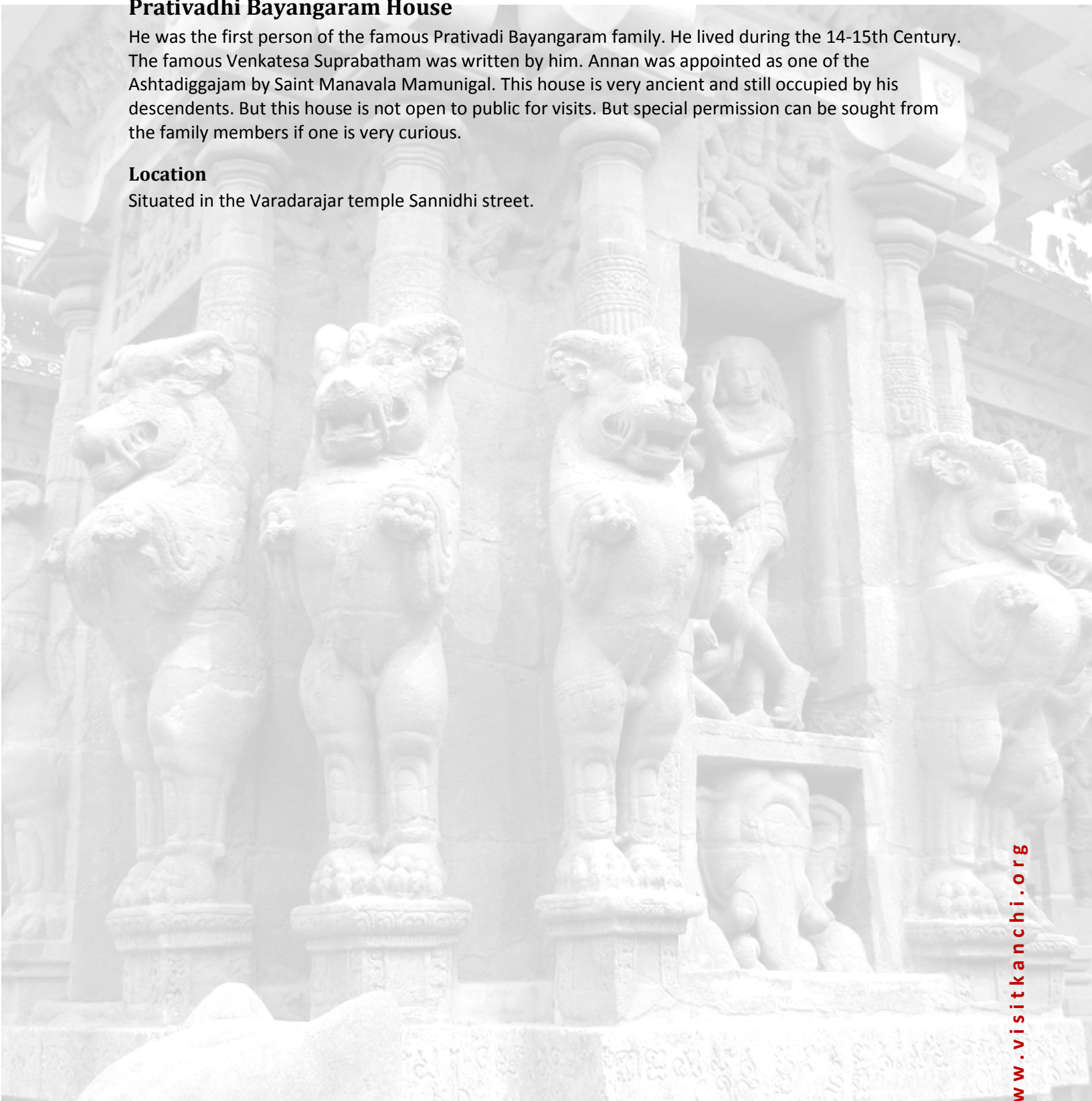


Prativadhi Bayangaram House

He was the first person of the famous Prativadi Bayangaram family. He lived during the 14-15th Century. The famous Venkatesa Suprabatham was written by him. Annan was appointed as one of the Ashtadiggajam by Saint Manavala Mamunigal. This house is very ancient and still occupied by his descendents. But this house is not open to public for visits. But special permission can be sought from the family members if one is very curious.

Location

Situated in the Varadarajar temple Sannidhi street.



Sankara Mutt

Category: Mutt

Adi Sankara was not only a great philosopher and preceptor, but an excellent institution builder and organizer. He established monastic institutions in four directions of India for the propagation of Advaita discipline – Mysore(south), Badrinath (north), Puri (east), Dwaraka (west). He himself assumed the headship of the Sarvajna Peetha at Kanchi. After the Digvijaya tours all over India, Adi Sankaracharya swettled down at Kanchi and established a mutt for his own residence in the city. He gave Sanyasa Deeksha to a very young boy of Thambaravarni valley, gave him the name Sarvajnatman and nominated him as his successor in Kanchi Kamakoti Mutt. A long line of unbroken erudite and pious Acharyas have adorned the Kamakoti Peetham. Some of the most famous in this line of Acharyas are Sri Krpa Sankara, Sri Muka Sankara, Sri Abhinava Sankara, Sri Paramasivendra Saraswati, Sri Bhodhendra Saraswati and the world renowned 68th Acharya, Pujiyasri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati Swamigal (Maha Periyaval. Adi Sankara took to Sanyasa directly from Brahmacharya Asrama. The same order is being followed till now where the Head of the Mutt is selected from Brahmacharis only. The Acharyas of Kamakoti Peetham have the title "Indra-Saraswati". The Acharyas themselves perform daily tri-kala pooja to Sri Chandramaulesvara in the mutt.

Location

Big Kanchipuram. Opposite to Gangaikondan Mandapam.



Tirugnana Sambandar Temple

When Saint Tirugnana Sambandar came to Kanchipuram he is said to have stayed in this place. Out of the five Padal Petra Shiva temples in Kanchi, Sambandar sang hymns about two temples namely, Tirumetralli Eswarar temple and the Tirukkaleeswarar temple. But Sambandar Padigam is available for only one temple, that is the Tirukkaleeswarar temple. As per legend, in this temple God Vishnu got the Shiva Saaroopam (figure of God Shiva) hearing the sacred hymns of Saint Sambandar. The presiding deity is actually Vishnu converted into Shiva. Attaining the figure of God Shiva is one of the methods of attaining Mukthi (liberation). God Vishnu wanted this. So Vishnu came here and for years he did penance to tell his wish to God Shiva. Appreciating his efforts, Shiva appeared before Vishnu and asked him to wait till the arrival of his devotee and child prodigy Sambandar. Many years later, Saint Sambandar came to this temple. Until then Vishnu continued his meditation. Sambandar sang many heartfelt hymns in praise of God Shiva here. Hearing them both Vishnu's heart and body melted and he attained Shiva Saaroopam as per his wish. Vishnu converted into Shiva due to hearing the songs of Sambandar was called as 'Odha Urugeesar' (melted while hearing the songs). This deity is the main deity in this temple while Shiva himself has a small separate shrine. Even though this legend is associated with Tirumetralli Eswarar and Tirugnana Sambandar, the Padigams he believed to have sung here are not available. The Sambandar temple is situated opposite to the Tirumetralli Eswarar temple in the same street. All the importance this temple got is that the devotees of Shiva welcomed Sambandar when he entered the Kanchipuram and chose this place to stay.

Location

Pillayar Palayam. Opposite to Tirumetralli Eswarar temple.



Tirukkachi Nambigal Sannidhi

This temple comes under the control of the Varadaraja Perumal temple. It has been built for the Tirukkacchi Nambigal. This is actually a Sannidhi of Varadaraja Perumal temple but existing outside it. Another reason for this is, it is considered to be place where Saint Tirukkacchi Nambigal resided during his stay in Kanchipuram. Details regarding the period of the construction of this temple is not available.

Location

Little Kanchipuram. This temple is situated in the right side while approaching Varadarajar temple from Rangasamy Kulam.

