

History of Chulipuram's Parralai Murugamurthy

Temple and The Significance of
8th Day Annual Festival
Celebrated Over 300 Years



Originally written in Tamil by Sivalogappillai Setukavalappallai in 1958
English version revised by Logan Nathan (Murugesu Sivalogannathan) in May 2025

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The current sponsor of the 8th Day Annual Festival since 2010

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Background of the Chulipuram's Landscape

In the southern part of India lies an island known as Sri Lanka. This island goes by various names, including Eela Nadu, Eelamandalam. This mango-shaped landscape island was once part of the Chola Nadu kingdom. The northern region of the island is called "Jaffna," named after Yavvallavan, an expert in the lyra (Jaffna), who received the region as a gift from the Chola king and settled there. Jaffna is located at the 'beak' of the mango shape, while Chulipuram is situated at the 'tip' of the mango.



Chulipuram's Intangible Heritage

Spanning between India and Sri Lanka is the 27-mile-wide Strait of Palk. Footprints attributed to Sri Ramapiran can be traced on both the northern and southern shores of the strait, notably at Vadakodi Vedaraniyam Kodikarai and Tenkodi Chulipuram Thiruvadi Nillai, renowned for their sacred bathing rituals (Teertham Snana Vise-sham). Legend has it that years ago, Srimanavalakuru from Vedaraniyam utilised a large pot as a makeshift raft to journey from Kodikarai to Chulipuram Thiruvadistan, eventually arriving at the Vinayaka Murthy Temple in S Chulipuram, as recounted by local elders. Furthermore, the year 1956 witnessed the remarkable feat of Mr. Navarathanasamy, who bravely swam across the strait. These historical anecdotes underscore the enduring ties between Southern India and the North of Sri Lanka (Jaffna).

In the Tretayuga (in tamil திரேதாயுகம்), Sri Ramapiran descended to a place known as Thiruvadithana in Chulipuram, later recognised as Thiruvadinillai (in tamil திருவடிநிலை). Devotees of Sambu (Shiva) erected dwellings at a location called "Maluvai" (in tamil மலுவை) near the temple. According to the Indian Kannada tradition, they excavated seven caves for themselves and their retinue to bathe in the well-watered coral, surrounded by nearby sanctuaries. Presently, these seven domes have been amalgamated into a lotus pond situated on the north side of the Murugamurthy temple on Second Road. Nearby, the intertwined bond between the bodhi tree and the neem tree presents a striking spectacle. To the west, beneath this grand tree, rests the Sivalingam established by Kandavanam Sundarampillai. Further south, one finds the Vairavamurthi temple founded by Kandiah and the Nagarpradittai temple established by various others. Notably, the construction of the robust stone edifice enclosing the lotus pond in the South Block was undertaken by T. K. Sundaram Pillai and his spouse.

Historical Accounts and Community Contributions in Chulipuram

In ancient times, a Chola princess resided in the area now known as 'Cholyapuram,' which eventually evolved into 'Chulipuram'. Over time, the Sambhil Shivalayam was relocated from there and established in the Sivan temple northeast of the Vinaya Murthy and Murugamurthy temples. Recently, the Kannakai (in Tamil கண்ணகை) Ambal temple has been erected to the south. Despite the passing centuries, remnants of the princess's residence can still be seen in Maluvai, though many structures have succumbed to time's ravages.

Noteworthy is the flower garden established by Mr. Chinnappu Ponnaiah Kailayapillai, the Chulipura Velar, for Srivinayaka Murthy and Srimurugamurthy in Chulipuram. Aasipillai meticulously tends to the garden, providing fragrant blossoms for the daily worship of the idols. May the Murthys bless Mr. K. Tavathurai, known as Appukattu, and grant him the strength to continue his dharma.

The Thillayambalam, established by Thillayambalam Vaidyalinga Upathiyar and inherited from Chulipuram Velalan, ensures the idols receive daily milk offerings. Financial support for this tradition is provided by Thamayan

Sabapathipilla. Subramaniathondar, son of Thillayambalam Kanagasapai, undertakes the noble task of carrying the kavadi (in Tamil காவடி) and journeying from town to town daily to offer milk to the two idols. Assisting him in this endeavor is Mr. K. Subramaniam. It is encouraged that everyone in the Thillayambalam family follows this dharma (or righteousness) and seeks the grace of Paralaimurthi to attain Sivaberu (or the greatness of Shiva). Sri Arunachalapulavar, younger brother of Vaityalinga Upadhyayyar, has composed songs Paralayesal in praise of the Murthys', continuing the legacy of this charitable work.

Generosity is also evident in the gift of a gold crown worth six thousand rupees by Arumugam Chinnaiya of Chulipuram Saivism, intended for Arumugavalla as an adornment. The community greatly appreciates this gesture. Additionally, individuals such as M. Thambirasa (United Union Office), M. Chinnaiyah (Nyayaduranthar), S. Rathinavel (Doctor Sub district), and the father of S. Rattanasabapathy (Professor) have contributed to the community's welfare.

Furthermore, the temple priests Sabaratna Gurukkal (priest) and Natarasha Gurukkal (priest) have dug a Tirtha well beneath the Vasantha Mandapam, adding to the spiritual significance of the area.



Poetic Tributes to the Saiva (Hindu) Temples

1. Jaffna Nallur Shaiva Vellalar Tradition:

Poet: Chinnathambi Pulavar
Composition: Pallu Prabandham
Tribute: Honoring Shri Vinayasamurthy.

2. Chulipuram Saiva Vellalar Tradition:

Poet: Mr. Kathirithambi Arumuga Upadhyayyar
Composition: Nala Chakrawarthy drama
Tribute: Prayed to Sri Murugamurthy for cure from eye disease during the 1873 festival. Connected to Sivalogappillai Setukavalappillai and Buddhist notary Mr. Subramaniam Kulaweeringam. His name is honored by Arumugavithiyasala in Chulipuram Chettigal Kurichi, established by his cousin, Notary Subramaniam.

3. Sri Paramanathar Arunachalapulavar:

Occupation: Saiva (Hindu) Agriculturist
Composition: Paralayesal (in Tamil பரலயேசல்) means 'destruction', 'devastation', or 'annihilation'. It is used to describe a state of complete ruin or extensive damage
Tribute: Dedicated volunteer of Palkkavadi (involves carrying a pot of milk (paal) on a kavadi, which is a decorated wooden or bamboo structure). Mr. T. Sabapathipillai was Subramaniam's younger uncle and paternal grandfather.

4. Mr. G. Vaithiyalingam:

Occupation: Judge and proponent of Chulipuram's agricultural heritage
Composition: Kandari Mani Maalai
Tribute: Son of current judge, Mr. T. Sankara Pillai. Part of the Parralai Murugan Temple's 6th Day Annual Festival Sponsor.

5. Mr. N. Velupillai:

Occupation: Proponent of Chulipuram's agricultural heritage
Composition: Thooththira Keerthanaigal
Tribute: Established the Feet Washing (Paatha Theertha) ceremony for the two idols, a charitable practice continuing to this day.

6. Shri C. Siva Prakasha Pandita:

Composition: Sri Murukara Rathnathrayam
Tribute: The younger father of Shanmuganathan A. Sivagurunathan. Sivagurunathan donated this hymn to Vinayaka Murti as a Thiruvasi (in Tamil திருவாசி) typically refers to the Tamil month of "Aadi" (in Tamil ஆடி) in the Tamil calendar. It's the fourth month in the Tamil calendar and usually falls between mid-July and mid-August in the Gregorian calendar. This month is considered auspicious for worshipping and conducting various ceremonies dedicated to the divine.

The Vinayaka Murthy Temple and Its History



The Vinayaka Murthy temple holds ancient roots, dating back to the time of the Tamil kings. During the Portuguese reign, attempts were made to demolish the temple, but Pillaiyar, through divine intervention, thwarted the demolishers by blinding them with the image of a crow. This miraculous event earned him the name 'Kakkaipillayar.' Meaning காக்கைகப்பிள்ளையார் refers to the Hindu deity Lord Ganesha or Vinayaka. This name is derived from two components: "Kakka" which means crow, and "Pillayar" which is another name for Ganesha or Vinayaka.

Originally constructed with Murugai stones, the temple was rebuilt in 1938 with Vaira stones by Vaithiyalingam Ponnambalam, a member of the Chulipuram agricultural family. Upon returning from a service job in Malaya, where he received an ex-gratia salary, Vaithiyalingam served as an irrigation engineer in Sri Lanka, followed by a tenure as a village magistrate of Chankanai. Recognising the challenges faced by volunteers visiting the temples during floods and mud, he persuaded the village owners of Chulipuram to construct a paved path from Thalaisaatee (entrance of the surrounding paddy field) to the Vinayagar Temple. Financial assistance for this project was provided by Chulipuram Union Malaya.



Path paved from the entrance of paddy field to the Vinayagar Temple with the assistance of Chulipuram Union Malaya Furthermore, efforts by Sanangal Swami led to the establishment of a wide footpath from the Kannakai Ammal temple to the Vinayagar temple in Chettipillai. Additionally, Sankarapillai Ramanathar Veethividhangar constructed a road along the coast from Point Pedro to Kangesanathurai at Chulipuram Thiruvadinnilai, connecting to the graveyard of Brahmins, Saivas, and Velalars located south of Theertha karai (Holy Bathing place).

Stones from places where swamis perform holy baths in Tiruvadithankadal were cleaned and taken by Victoria College Founder Kanakaratanam Mudaliyar's grandson, V. Thillaiyambalam, and others to facilitate Thirtham. This esteemed individual is revered for his piety and contributions to temple rituals.

The Karpakraga Mandapam, housing the Panchamukha Vinayakamurthy, was constructed with the financial assistance of Sivalogar Setukavalappillai. The idols of the roaming chariot (in Tamil ரத்தவாகனம் or also referred as

Chapparam) in the Paralai temple were crafted by an expert sculptor from India many years ago and have recently undergone repairs by the Chulipuram Malaysia Union. Devotees worship Vinayakamurthy with his five faces and Sri Murugamurthy with his six faces of mercy on Ani Uttara and Vaikasi Visakham, respectively, every year. Panchamukha and Shanmukha Archanas are performed by the descendants of

Udiyar Subramaniam Udiyar during the three days when Swami descends from the chariot. Veluppillai's son, Kumaraguru, and his sisters play a significant role in these rituals, offering Padathirtham as part of their devotion.

Valli Nayaki and Deiva Nayaki reside on both sides of Lord Muruga at the moolasthanam (in Tamil மூலஸ்தானம் root place), providing blessings from the east side. The graceful view of Sri Arumugavalal standing with a weapon and gracious faces, facing south, brings bliss (state of happiness or in Tamil ஆனந்தம் to the devotees.

History of 8th Day Annual Festival at Parralai Sri Murugamurthy Temple



The Murugamurthy idol in this temple was established 300 years ago by the wife of Muthambalavana Mudaliar, a Saivite monk. Since then, the tradition has been upheld by generations of devotees. On the 8th day of the annual festival, Visvanatha Mudaliar, son of Sethukavala Mudaliar of the Chulipuram Saiva lineage, continued the tradition. His son, Sivaloka Mudaliar, and subsequent descendants Veerabhatrapilla, Sivalogopillai, Chirambalam (Thombar), and Kathiresan

(Itniyar) continued the practice. In 1915, Lord Muruga instructed Kathiresan to depict his marriage to Vallinayaki Yamman during the ceremony. This led to the initiation of the Vallinayaki Thirukalyanam (meaning in Tamil வள்ளிநாயகி திருக்கல்யாணம்) refers to the sacred celestial marriage of Lord Murugan (also known as Vallinayagar) with the goddess Valli. This marriage ceremony is a significant event in Hindu mythology, particularly in the worship of Lord Murugan, and is celebrated with great enthusiasm during the 8th festival day until late 1960s.

The marriage ceremony was conducted with elaborate rituals and dramatic performances, drawing widespread acclaim. Over the years, cultural performances became an integral part of the festival, with various artists and performers contributing to its richness.

In 1940, Sri Sivaprakasa Yogeeswarar performed Upanishad, adding to the spiritual significance of the festival. Magnificent decorations, including a chariot and peacock adorned with diamond work, were arranged on the temple road in April 1939.

As of the year 1958, the esteemed Sivalogappillai Setukavalappallai assumes the responsibility of overseeing the 8th day annual festival, a role passed down through generations. Following his meticulous guidance, the festival flourishes under his stewardship, reflecting his deep-rooted commitment to tradition and community.

Looking towards the future, the baton of responsibility is poised to transition to the capable hands of Chellapah Murugesu and thereafter, Murugesu Sivaloganathan and Suppiah Udayashothi, who stand ready to uphold the legacy and ensure the seamless continuation of this revered tradition. Their dedication to preserving the essence of the festival embodies a profound respect for the cultural heritage ingrained within their lineage.



Sivalogappillai
Setukavalappallai
Sponsor from
1936 to 1966



Chellapa
Murugesu
Sponsor from
1966 to 1982



Saraswathy Devi
Murugesu
Sponsor from
1982 to 2010



Murugesu
Sivaloganathan
(Logan Nathan)
Current Sponsor
since 2010

Chellapa Murugesu indeed carried on his responsibilities after Sivalogappillai Setukavalappallai from 1964. However, with the passing of Chellapa Murugesu in 1982, the responsibility falls upon his devoted wife, Saraswathy Devi Murugesu, who valiantly carries forward the mantle of tradition. For nearly three decades, she navigates the complexities of organizing the festival with grace and resilience, infusing each celebration with her unwavering dedication and love for the community. Following her passing in 2010, the torchbearer of tradition now rests firmly in the hands of Logan Nathan (Murugesu Sivaloganathan), who stands as the steadfast guardian of this cherished legacy. With a deep sense of reverence and commitment, he continues to honour the traditions passed down by his forebears, ensuring that the spirit of the festival endures for generations to come.

A small fund has been established for the purpose of holy decorations, and efforts have been made to maintain and refurbish the temple infrastructure, including the Chapparam cart and the Mayivaakanam, which was refurbished in 2023 by Logan Nathan (Murugesu Sivaloganathan)



Chapparam Cart built in April 1939 and newly refurbished in May 2023



Mayivaakanam built in April 1939 refurbished and repainted in May 2024

The methods of performing the 8th Annual Festival



The 8th day annual festival at the Murugamurthy Temple commences with the decoration of halls at 6 am, followed by the arrangement of conchs (or sacred conch shells) and kumbhas (refers to pots or vessels, specifically the kalasha or kumbha, which is a pot filled with water and topped with fresh leaves, a coconut) for Sathakala Sangabhishekam (Sacred Anointing Ceremony refers to a religious or ceremonial event where sacred substances such as water, milk, yogurt, honey, and/or oils are poured over an idol or deity) starting at 8 am. The abhishekam rituals (refers to a Hindu ritual of pouring liquids like water, milk, ghee, honey, or other substances over the idol of a deity or sacred object as an offering. This ritual is performed as an act of devotion and to invoke blessings from the deity. It is believed to purify the idol and bestow divine grace upon the devotees, including Thiruneeru (in tamil திருநீரு, meaning it is a sacred ash used by Hindus) abishekam, Sandalwood abhishekam, and Annabhishekam (in Tamil அன்னாபிஷேகம் refers to a ritual in Hinduism where food, particularly rice, is used for abhishekam), commence at 10 am. After the abhishekam, sarkkarai amirdham (in Tamil சர்க்கரை அமிர்தம் or sugar nectar) is prepared, millet candles are lit, and pooja is conducted.

At noon, religious preaching sessions take place in Vasantha Mandapam, accompanied by a traditional Nathaswaram concert (in Tamil நாதஸ்வரம் is a traditional Tamil cultural musical instrument and also refers to a genre of classical music played with that instrument. It's a large wind instrument similar to a clarinet, but much larger, with a double reed) concert. Lord Muruga's idol then parades through the inner and outer temple streets on a decorated green peacock, showered with flowers by devotees. Male and female devotees sing hymns and perform Angaprathasana and Kumbhidhana, while priests conduct Vedaparayana Devara, Thiruvasaki, and Tirupugalkoshti. During Deeparathana at Vasantha Mandapam, devotees are offered Thiruneeru, Sandalwood, and Panchamirtham chitrannas (in Tamil "சித்திரண்ணாள்" refers to a rice dish that is flavoured with various spices and sometimes mixed with vegetables or lentils).

In the evening around 7 o'clock, Lord Muruga's idol proceeds to inner circle street of the temple. After lighting the lamps. Lord Muruga's idol emerges from the outer street in a pearl-pulled carrier, gathering devotees in the decorated Sapparam Sannithanam (in Tamil "சப்பாரம் சன்னிதானம் or refer sacred or consecrated space). Renowned Sangeet Vidhus (or devotees) perform the Katabha (a Sanskrit-derived word meaning story telling) sermon with instruments around 10 o'clock, captivating listeners with the divine story of marriage, which lasts approximately 3 hours. Lord Muruga's idol then descends from the sabbaram and joins the devotees singing and playing Nathaswaram accompanied Thavil (Drums used in Tamil cultural functions) by group of people who specialising in these instruments.

Refer to the pictures above.

Continuation of Tradition

The continuity of the 8th Day Festival, as described by Sivalogappillai Setukavalappallai, has been upheld by successive generations, including Chellappa Murugesu and Mrs. Saraswathy Devi Murugesu. As of 2024, Murugesu Sivaloganathan (Logan Nathan) continues to sponsor the festival. Although the late-night 3-hour event has been discontinued due to challenges in the country over the past 30 years, the festival's essence remains intact.

On the third day, dedicated to Vinayakamurthy Animagam and Murugamurthy Vaikasi Visakha, significant events such as lunar and solar eclipses, Masi Magam, and Shivarathri are observed. Additionally, auspicious occasions like Thaipusam witness Thiruvadithanal Thirtham administration.

Charitable activities and offerings to the idols continue to be carried out by descendants of prominent individuals, ensuring the temple's prosperity. Restoration efforts are underway for ancient temples and monasteries, emphasising the community's commitment to preserving heritage.

Family History of 8th Day Annual Festival at Parralai Sri Murugamurthy Temple

The rich history of this annual festival is depicted in the family tree below, spanning over 300 years from its origins to the current sponsor.

It began with the Muthaliyar family, leaders of their village community, followed by the agricultural Pillai family. Over the last three generations, family members have pursued various professional careers, integrating with modern life and moving beyond traditional Tamil caste identities.

Today, although family members live all around the world, most remain dedicated to supporting the 8th day festival, which has been celebrated for over 300 years since the temple's inception. This dedication was evident in the most recent 8th Day annual festival held in May 2024. Family members attended the event from Australia, the UK, and Canada, while others participated via live stream using modern technology.

Acknowledgements

As I have lived abroad for the past 49 years, I have returned annually for the past 8 years specifically to attend the 8th day festival. This attachment stems from my childhood memories of the temple, initially shaped by my grand uncle Sivalogappillai Setukavalappallai, and later by observing my father, Chellapa Murugesu. Most importantly, it was my mother, Saraswathy Devi Murugesu, who continuously encouraged me to remain connected. She kept me updated on the progress and challenges she faced while conducting the annual 8th day festival with the support of well-wishers, close relatives, and friends.

Over the past 8 years, I have reconnected with close relatives, prominent leaders associated with the temple, priests and their families, temple committee members, the volunteers club (known as Thodar Sabai in Tamil), Nathaswaram music groups, folk dancers, and logistic supporters. Their encouragement has been instrumental in sustaining my involvement.

I want to specifically mention the following individuals who have been pivotal in making the festival possible:

1. My wife, Nimmie Nathan: Although born into a Christian family and a practising one, she has been an unconditional supporter and a source of strength, making the last 8 years of the 8th day festival possible and supporting its future continuation.
2. Sivakalai Ratnagopal: My cousin and daughter of Sivasithabaram, she handles logistics efficiently.
3. Ratna Gopal: Sivakalai's husband, who, alongside her, ensures the logistics run smoothly.
4. Sivakumaran (Siva) Sivasithabaram: Son of Sivasithabaram, a silent supporter who, along with his family, adds strength to the event.
5. Thangham and Pooma: Relatives of Sivalogappillai Setukavalappallai, who provide additional pooja materials from the temple farmland.
6. Ajantha Subramaniam and her team: My cousin and a great supporter, responsible for preparing the food items distributed after the morning festival.
7. Vakeyen: my greatest strength in improving the 8th day festival event each year.

8. Nathan Iyar and his family members: They understand my challenges and accommodate my wishes to ensure the 8th day festival's success annually.
9. Thushanth Sivakumaran: The son of Siva, this young man assisted me in rewriting this book. His research on the original version written by Sivalogappillai Setukavalappallai and his deep understanding of our Tamil culture and Chulipuram family roots have been invaluable. Without him, this would not have been possible. I admire him greatly and consider him a lifelong support and potential successor for running the 8th day festival with my sons' assistance in the future.

These individuals have played crucial roles in sustaining and enhancing the 8th day festival, and I am deeply grateful for their continued support.

10. Suhashiny Rajendran for translating the Tamil version to Sinhala, and Harina Vidyanatha for their assistance with the graphical layout for the final book.
11. My classmate and dear childhood friend Sarvanada, for his long-standing support in making the printing of this book possible with the final touch up to with final feedback.
12. The Paralai Murugan Temple Committee members for their thorough due diligence and support in releasing this book.

Suhasiny Rajendiran
443, Godellawatte Road
Malabe
NIC: 857851013V

Date: 29th May 2025

To:
The Committee
Paralai Murugan Temple
Chullipuram

Subject: Confirmation of Sinhala Translation of Temple History

Dear Esteemed Committcc Members,

I, **Suhasiny Rajendiran**, holder of NIC number **857851013V** and residing at **443, Godellawatte Road, Malabe**, hereby wish to officially confirm that I have completed the **Sinhala translation** of the *History of the Chullipuram Paralai Murugan Temple*, based on the original Tamil version.


This translation was carried out upon the request of **Mr. Logan Nathan**, and it is with heartfelt sincerity that I express what a **privilege and a true blessing** it has been for me to be entrusted with this sacred task.

I would like to extend my **deepest gratitude** to Mr. Logan Nathan and the entire Paralai Murugan Temple Committee for placing their trust in me. It has been an honor to contribute in this small way to the rich legacy of the temple.

May Lord Murugan continue to bless the Committee in all its future endeavors. I wish you all continued success and spiritual prosperity.

With warm regards,

Sincerely,


Suhasiny Rajendiran
857851013V



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