

# **INTERNSHIP REPORT (2020-2021)**

## **II M.A – ANCIENT HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY**

*Submitted By*

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## **BHAKTAVATSALA PERUMAL TEMPLE, THRUNINRAVUR**

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The assigned project was successfully completed by me during the intern period from 7.12.2020 to 15.12.2020.

I would like to thank all the officials for their help and support.

## **TEMPLE SURVEY PROJECT**

Temple Survey project carries out the architectural survey of temples in different parts of the country, they prepare the detailed plan of the surveyed structure. A temple was assigned and a report on Bhaktavatsala Perumal Temple, Thiruninravur was prepared.

### **Bhaktavatsala Perumal Temple, Thiruninravur**

#### **Introduction**

Bhaktavatsala Perumal Temple is a Hindu temple dedicated to Lord Vishnu located at Thiruninravur near Chennai City in Thiruvallur District of Tamilnadu. Constructed in the Dravidian style of architecture, the temple is glorified in the Divya Prabandha, the early medieval Tamil canon of the Azhwar saints from the 6th–9th centuries AD. It is one of

the 108 Divya Desam dedicated to Vishnu, who is worshipped as Bhaktavatsala Perumal and his consort Lakshmi as Ennai Petra Thayar. Thirunindravur is also the home town of Pusalar, the Nayanar saint.

The temple is believed to have been built by the Pallavas of the late 8th century AD, with later contributions from Medieval Cholas and Vijayanagar kings. A granite wall surrounds the temple, enclosing all the shrines and two bodies of water. There is a five-tiered Rajagopuram, the temple's gateway tower, in the temple. Six daily rituals and three yearly festivals are held at the temple. The temple is maintained and administered by the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board of the Government of Tamil Nadu. This sthalam is under the control of Periya Jeeyar of Tirupati – Tirumala. The Temple is situated very close to the Hridayaleeswarar Temple in Thiruninravur.

## **History**

The temple was built during the Pallava period of the 9th century as seen from the various inscriptions in the temple. The earliest inscriptions of the temple are dated between 820 and 890 AD during the period of Nripatungavarman. There are inscriptions from the later Chola kings like Rajendra Chola II (1051–1063 AD), Virarajendra Chola (1063–1070 AD)

and Raja Raja Chola II (1146–1173 AD). Legend is that Samudra Raja (Lord Varuna), who is the father of Goddess Lakshmi, worshipped Lord Vishnu here. Thiruninravur is considered as the place of Goddess as she settled here first and then Lord came here to Her place. The rarity of this temple is that the Lord Sri Bhakthavatsala Perumal is staying permanently at his in-law's place. As Goddess settled here first, the place itself had got its name after her. In Thamizh, 'Thiru' means Sri Lakshmi, 'Ninra' means stood, 'Vur' means place.

It is also that Thirumangai Alvar did not sing any pasuram (songs) here and Vishnu followed Thirukadalmallai and sang songs praising the deity Bhaktavatsala Perumal from there. Lakshmi requested Perumal to appear before the azhwar, but when he did Azhwar had already reached Tirukannapuram. Perumal again appeared in the dreams of the Azhwar who felt that he was viewing Bhaktavatsala in Thirukannapuram.

The Pallava inscriptions mention this place as Ninravur and some of them quote it as Virudhunagar Bhayankar-chaturvedi mangalam, a subdivision of Punarkottam.

## **Legends**

### **Thirunindravur:**

Once, Mother Mahalakshmi (Tiru) left Perumal due to some reasons, came and stood (Nindra) here, hence, the place came to be known as Tiru Nindra Oor (place). Her father Samudra Rajan (as Mahalakshmi was born in the milk ocean, the king of oceans-Samudra Rajan is her father) came to her, cooled her anger and asked her to go back to her Lord Perumal, she refused. The king of oceans went to Perumal and begged him to come and take back his daughter Mahalakshmi. Lord asked him to go before him and assured to follow him.

Samudra Raja told Mahalakshmi that he was not her father but she was his "Ennai Petra Thayar" 'You who gave me birth' and requested her to come back to Vaikunta and rule the world. Perumal too joined the compromise, Sri Mahalakshmi went back with Perumal. As Lord responded to the prayer of Bhakta (devotee) Samudra Rajan, He is called Bhaktavatsalan. As Samudra Rajan said "Ennai Petra Thayar" that came to stay as the name of the Mother of the temple. Also, as

prayed by Samudra Raja, they are growing together in the Wedding Form.

### **Thirumangai Azhwar Pasurams:**

Saint Tirumangai Azhwar was passing through many sacred Vaishnava shrines including Thiruninravur but did not sing on this temple. Noticing that Azhwar bypassed this temple, Mother asked Lord to get a hymn from Azhwar. By the time Lord reached Azhwar, he was in Mamallapuram. Lord demanded a song Azhwar from this place. Excited by the simplicity and grace of the Lord, Azhwar sang meaning as follows: "My Lord, protecting the whole universe, came to me to make known his love for the Bhaktas at this sacred Mamallapuram.

He demanded and took a song from me." Mother Mahalakshmi was not satisfied with one song. She asked the Lord to go back to Azhwar for the remaining 9 songs as he used to sing 10 for all temples. Azhwar had already left Mamallapuram and had reached Thirukkannamangai. He saw Lord with a side look waiting for him and in the Pathigam (10 songs) on Thirukkannamangai Perumal, Azhwar included Thiruninravur Perumal also in the hymns.

## **Lakshmi Pooja:**

As the name suggests, this is the temple for wealth, prosperity and all the wealth in the world. There is a nine-squared matrix drawn in front of the Ennai Petra Thayar Sannathi as shown in the picture, which has specific numbers. By replicating this matrix in your pooja room and placing one-rupee coins (or any coins such as quarters if you are out of India) on each of the squares, and praying for nine days, it is proven that one's prayers and wishes are granted. The pooja can be performed by drawing the Yantra in the pooja room on a flat surface using white Kolam powder or with the card that is sold in the temple.

Pooja should be done for nine days by placing one-rupee coins (any coins of same denominations) in each of the boxes, applying sandal paste, kumkum and flowers on the matrix and reciting the Lakshmi Ashtothra. The coins of the previous day are then removed and stored safely and a new set of coins are used the next day. After completing nine days of pooja the 81 coins along with thambulam for nine sumangalis are taken to the temple.

The temple priest places the coins at the Thayar's feet and performs archana. The first Thambulam is then offered to the Goddess. After that,



he gives the coins back to the devotee who then deposits the coins in the Hundi outside the shrine. The remaining thambulams are given to other women in the temple. It is preferable to start the pooja on Friday. If Friday happens to be a full moon day, it is even more auspicious.

### **Lord Vishnu darshan to Varuna:**

It is also said that the Perumal here is always giving darshan to Lord Varuna.

### **Pallava King built this temple on Lord's instruction:**

Later days, with the divine instruction of the Lord, a Pallava King had constructed this temple and arranged for Brahmotsavam etc.

### **Kubera regained his Lost Wealth:**

Kubera, the richest god, once lost his wealth and offered prayers to Goddess Ennai Petra Thayar or Sudhavalli and regained his lost wealth. Hence Thiruninravur Bhaktavatsala Temple is also called Sukra Kshetram (holy place of Venus, planet of good fortune) and Kubera Puram.

## **Dharamadvajan regained his Lost Wealth:**

Another legend says that King Dharamadvajan, a descendent of the Surya clan, prayed here in Panguni (March-April) and regained his lost wealth.

## **Architecture**

The temple is built during the, and is estimated to be 1500 years old.

The *Moolavar*(presiding deity) of the temple is Bakthavatsala. The

*Moolavar* is at a standing position facing east. The height of the

*Moolavar* is around 10 ft (3.0 m). The *Utsavar*(procession deity) is called

Patharaavi and is made of panchaloha and is accompanied by two

consorts as in most *Vaishnavite* temples. There is a separate shrine for

*Ennai Petra Thayar* also called Sudhavalli, the consort of Bakthavatsala.

The temple also has separate shrines for Andal, Chakkarathazhwar, the

Alwars and Sri Ramanuja. On the banks of a lake a few meters behind

this temple is another temple for Rama. In this temple there is a statue of

Hanuman lifting Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders. The temple is

administered by the Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments

department of Tamil Nadu government. The Pedda Jeeyar of Tirupati is

the permanent trustee of the temple.

The temple is east facing with 5-tiered Rajagopuram at the entrance and two precincts. The temple is large with huge praharams (enclosures) and stone compound walls. There are beautiful carvings on the ceiling at the entrance of Rajagopuram. Dwajasthambam, pali peedam are at the entrance of the temple. The main sanctum has Artha mandapam and Maha Mandapam. There is a Shrine for Yoga Narasimhar in the Artha mandapam.

Presiding Deity is called Bhaktavatsala Perumal. Presiding Deity is in standing position facing east and is around 10 ft (3.0 m). He graces the devotees with his five weapons. The Utsavar (procession deity) is called Patharaavi Perumal is made of Panchaloha and is accompanied by two consorts as in most Vaishnavite temples. There is a Andal Nachiyar Utsava Idol located in front of the presiding deity.

The Vimana-tower above the sanctum sanctorum is called Utpala Vimana. A beautiful 4-pillared stone Mandapam in front of the sanctum has some wonderful carvings on the pillars. There is a separate shrine for Ennai Petra Thayar also called Sudhavalli, the consort of Bhaktavatsala Perumal. Mother Goddess is all merciful raining all

prosperities to her devotees and is praised as Vaibhava Lakshmi.

Thayar shrine is situated to the right of the sanctum.

Paramapatha Vasal is located in Northern Prakaram. There is a 4-pillared stone Mandapam on the outer Prakaram, meant for Urchavams, with beautiful carvings. Divine serpent Adisesha has a special shrine in the temple. A pillar containing the figure of Narasimha is also considered to be a small shrine. There is an Anjaneyar Shrine opposite the temple, facing west. The beautiful temple chariot is parked there adjacent to Anjaneyar Shrine.

The temple also has separate shrines for Andal, Chakkarathzhwar, Azhwars, Ramanuja, Manavala Mamunigal, Koorathalwan, Thirumangai Alwar Senai Mudaliar and Urchavar mandapam in the prakarams. The temple has a nice pond nearby, called Varuna Pushkarani, which is the Theertham for this temple. Another Theertham associated with this Temple is Vruthaksheera Nadhi. Sthala Vriksham is in Parijatham.

There are 2 stone inscriptions on the north-east side of the temple, of which one dates back to 1917, where a lady from Chennai had donated

her house to the temple, from which the temple shall raise funds to feed the pilgrims visiting the temple.

## **Literary Mentions**

The temple is revered in Nalayira Divya Prabhandham, the 7th–9th century Vaishnava canon, by Thirumangai alvar. The Azhwars have sung praise on the different forms of Bhaktavatsala Perumal. The temple is classified as a Divyadesam, one of the 108 Vishnu temples that are mentioned in the book. Many Acharyas have also written songs on the various forms of God in this Temple. This temple is also called Srinivasa Kshethra, the abode of Srinivasa (Vishnu) and is mentioned in two hymns (1089 and 1642) of Thirumangai Alvar in the 'Nalayira Divya Prabhandham' (4000 sacred hymns).

Having visited Thiruvallur, about 17 Kms west of Thiruninravur, Thirumangai Azhvaar comes to Thiru Ninravur and finding the Lord and Goddess relaxing and enjoying themselves, he decides to move on and

gives Thiruninravur a miss. Thirumangai does not wait, moves on to Thiruvallikkeni. Unhappy with Thiru Mangai Azhvaar giving Thiruninravur a miss, Thayar asks the Lord to find ThiruMangai and to get him to sing praise of this place. According to Thayar's wish, Lord goes to Thiruvallikkeni only to find that Thirumangai has already left. Same scenario repeats as the Lord moves on to Thiruvidandai on the Eastern sea shore. Finally, the Lord catches up with Thiru Mangai Azhvaar at Thiru Kadal Mallai. Finding the Lord standing in front of him and looking for praise from him, Thirumangai Azhwar sings: Lord returns to Thiruninravur with a single Pasuram. Happy with this, the Lord returns to Thiruninravur only to find the Goddess disappointed once again. Thirumangai who has sung several verses in praise of other Lords could give us only one, said the Goddess to the Lord. And forced him to follow Thirumangai a 2nd time. Lord went back in search of ThiruMangai. On reaching Kadal Mallai, the Lord found that Thiru Mangai had moved on. Lord followed him all the way and finally tracked him down at Thiru Kanna Mangai (near Thiruvarur), south of Kadal Mallai. With the Lord entering the place, Thirumangai had noticed him and welcomed him.

## **Festivals and Religious Practices**

The temple follows the traditions of the Thenkalai sect of Vaishnavite tradition and follows Pancharatna. The temple priests perform the pooja (rituals) during festivals and on a daily basis. As at other Vishnu temples of Tamil Nadu, the priests belong to the Vaishnavite community, a Brahmin sub-caste. The temple rituals are performed six times a day: Ushathkalam at 7 a.m., Kalasanthi at 8:00 a.m., Uchikalam at 12:00 p.m., Sayarakshai at 6:00 p.m., Irandamkalam at 7:00 p.m. and Ardha Jamam at 8:30 p.m.

Each ritual has three steps: alangaram (decoration), nivedhanam (food offering) and deepa aradanai (waving of lamps) for both Bhaktavatsala Perumal and Sudhavalli Thayar. During the last step of worship, nagaswaram (pipe instrument) and tavil (percussion instrument) are played, religious instructions in the Vedas (sacred text) are recited by priests, and worshippers prostrate themselves in front of the temple mast. There are weekly, monthly and fortnightly rituals performed in the temple. Brahmotsavam during Panguni (March - April), Panguni Thiruvonam in March-April, birth star days of Sri Vaishnava Acharyas and 12 Azhwars, Chitra Poornima in April-May and Wedding festivals,

Deepavali in October-November, Sri Jayanthi Utsavam during Aavani, Tirukarthikai in November-December, Tiruadyana Utsavam during Margazhi (December - January), Vaikunda Ekadasi in December-January, Masi Magam in February-March, Thai Pongal and Ratha Saphami in January-February are the festivals celebrated in the temple. All full moon days, Tiruvonam star days, Fridays and Saturdays are special puja days in the temple.

## **Conclusion**

The temple is revered in *Nalayira Divya Prabandham*, the 7th–9th century Vaishnava canon, by Thirumangai alvar. The Azhwars have sung praise on the different forms of Bhaktavatsala Perumal. The temple is classified as a *Divyadesam*, one of the 108 Vishnu temples that are mentioned in the book. Many Acharyas have also written songs on the various forms of God in this Temple.













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# IMAGES



	<b>Dhivyadesam no.</b>	55
	<b>Main Deity</b>	Bhaktavatsalar, Ennai Petra Thaayaar
	<b>Location</b>	Thiruninravur, Chennai, Tamil Nadu
	<b>Architecture Style</b>	Dravidian (Pallava style)
	<b>Temple age</b>	1200 Years
	<b>Azwar who did Mangalasanam</b>	Thirumangaiyazwar
	<b>Divyaprabandam reference</b>	Peria Thirumozhi (1089, 1642)
	<b>Unique Specialties</b>	i) “Maam Ekam Sharanam Vraja” seen in the right hand of the Lord (like Oppiliappan) ii) Muthali Andan’s birthplace (Disciple of Sri Ramanuja)
	<b>Prayers made for</b>	Lakshmi Pooja performed here will ensure wealth and prosperity to all
	<b>Popular Events</b>	Chitra Pournami (Mar-Apr), Sri Jayanthi (Aug- Sep), Brahmotsavam (Mar –Apr)







