
Aarsha Vidya Bharati - Nov 2021

A monthly newsletter that will bring you more happiness, more wisdom and more freedom



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Kshetram - Temples and Tales of Sacred Bharat

Thiruvanchuzhi Śweta Vināyakar temple
By Usha Swarup, Mumbai



Location: Thiruvanchuzhi, Kumbakonam taluk, Tanjore District, Tamil Nadu

Presiding Deity: ThiruValanchuzhi Nathar aka Kapardeeshwara [*swayambhu mūrti*].

Goddess: Devi Brihannayaki

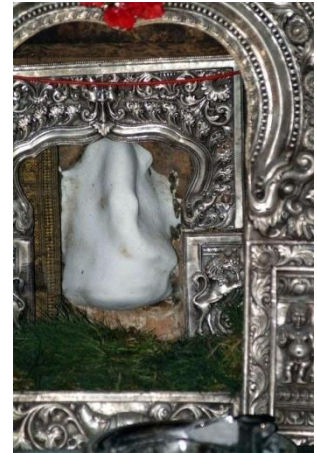
Other deities: Lord Valanchuzhi Vinayāgar, Shani, Murugan , Ugra Bhairava

Sthala vriksham: Bilva Tree

Teertham: Kaveri, Arasalaru, Jata teertham

Key Highlights:

- Lord Indra has consecrated this shrine. Lord Brahma, Vishnu and *Ādiśeṣa* also visit to pray. Those who worship the Lord here get the benefit of worshipping the lord every day.
- The small *mūrti* of lord Ganesha, called *Śweta/Vellai* Vināyakar is made up of Sea foam and sand and hence white in colour. “*Śweta*” or “*Vellai*” means white.
- The trunk of Lord *Śweta* Vināyakar swirls towards the right, This is considered rare and auspicious to worship. Thiruvanchuzhi-(thiru-sacred, valanchuzhi-right).
- Also, river Cauvery flows to the right of the shrine as though hugging it.



Temple tips:

- Visit this shrine first, if you are planning to visit Swami Malai [one of the six divine abodes of Lord Kartikeya which is 0.5 km away].
- It is recommended to sit on the *Maṇḍapam* opposite the main shrine and pray to lord *Vināyaka* for atonement of *pāpa*. There is a boon to this effect.
- Worship the lord here for problems relating to settlement of marriage.

Timings: 6:00 AM – 12:00 PM; 4:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Legends

It is customary to worship lord Ganesha at the beginning of any event. When the *Devās* and *Asurās* decided to undertake the 'Samudra Manthan' (churning of the ocean) in order to procure the “divine *amṛta*”, they forgot to worship Lord *Vighna-hartā*, and hence ended up facing a lot of troubles. Realising this mistake, Lord Indra, created a *Mūrti* of Lord Ganesha out of the Milky Ocean, using foam and other marine items and worshipped the Lord for success. After the success of the event, when Indra returned to Bhumi to take the *Vināyaka Mūrti* to *Svarga*, it would not budge. So, it stayed at Thiruvanchuzhi. Legends say Indra comes here to worship lord Ganesha every *Bhādrapada Śukla Caturthi* even now. The temple is originally believed to have been built by Kanaka Chola.

Once, when Naga *Ādiśeṣa* came from *Pātāla loka* to worship Lord *Vināyaka* here, a deep chasm was created into which the river *Kāveri* disappeared. The Chola king who later ruled here was worried about the absence of *Kāveri* and prayed for a way to bring Her back. During worship, he heard an *ākāśavāṇi* saying that if any king or sage sacrificed himself by jumping into the chasm, it would get closed, facilitating *Kāveri* to flow once again. The king decided to sacrifice himself when a Sage named Herandar volunteered to do so for *Loka kalyāna*. As soon as the sage jumped into the chasm, river *Kāveri* emerged from *Pātāla loka*. A *Mūrti* of Sage Herandar was later sculpted to honour this great sage. *Ādiśeṣa* even now visits Thiruvanchuzhi, on Maha Shivaratri to pray here.

Temple structure

The temple is grand. The *Garbha-gṛaha* with the white *Vināyaka Mūrti* is protected by silver and golden frames. No *abhiṣeka* or Puja items are offered to the deity, lest the foam wears away. Every decoration and splendour is for the frames alone. The only offering is ‘Paccha Karpooram’ (edible camphor), which is finely crushed and sprinkled over the *Mūrti*.

The temple has a grand sculpted door made out of stone. Named as the ‘karungal palagani’, it is a marvelous architectural feat. Just outside the main sanctum is a *maṇḍapa* called the “mannippu *maṇḍapam*” or the hall of forgiveness. It is a pillared platform made of rough uncut stones. People who visit the temple meditate on the Lord sitting on this *maṇḍapa* asking for forgiveness of their *pāpa*, and for *Mokṣa*.