Glimpses of Sri Vanamalai Perumal Temple
Nanguneri in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu

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Introduction
Nanguneri has one of the famous temple dedicated to Lord Vanamalai and Goddesses Sri Devi and Bhuma Devi. The presence of Sri Vanamalai temple in Nanguneri testifies the antiquity of Vaishnavism a sect of Hinduism. Sri Vanamalai temple of Nanguneri has made unique contribution in constructing the religious and social life of the past and present people. The temple also supply the various valuable inscriptions. Which serve as authentic evidences to know about the history of the Pandyas.

Sri Vanamalai Temple – Nanguneri is the ninety in the series of the 108 Divyadesas dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Nanguneri is located thirty kilometers South of Tirunelveli lying on the Tirunelveli-Kanyakumari road as well as on the Northern bank of Namibiyaru river. Nanguneri Town the taluk head quarters is also known as Sri Varamangala Nagar, Sri Varamangalam and Sri Purasumangal. In later days it was also called as Thothathri Vanamalai and Nanguneri. It is considered to be the father in laws place of Lord Vishnu. This place was ruled by the Pandya King Nedum Chadiyar Paranthagan (765 A.D. – 796 A.D.) Who was also known as Swirman. Hence the name of this town was called by the name Sri Varamangalam. The Vanamalai perumal temple is dedicated to Lord, Thothadi and is celebrated seat of Vaishnavism glorified by Nammalwar of the seventh century A.D. This temple is under the maintenance and control of Srivanamalai Mutt. Thotha means removal of Sins and Athri means mountain. This mountain is said to have risen from the bed of the holy tank Pankaja. Which serve as authentic evidences to know about the history of the temple.

The architecture in this temple is a mixture of both Pandya and Kerala styles. This temple is situated in an area of about 1500 square feet. According to mythology. It was constructed by the celestial architect at the instance of Lord Vishnu himself. The temple was introduced by the Pandya and Nayaks King and later by the successive heads of Vanamalai Mutt. The temple is famous for superstructure, the 200 feet Ornamental gopuram soaring high at the main entrance. It is a very attractive albeit having few images. It consists of miniature columns beautifully decorated one above the other in the vertical order. This magic was done with the help of brick and mortar. Very big walls surround the temple on all the four sides making it a picture framed in stones.

The Presiding deity of Lord Thothadi is in the sitting posture on the couch and under the canopy of Adisesha with consorts Sri Devi and Bhudevi and the divine dames les Urvasi and Thilothama. The gingly oil used in the Abisehgam ceremonies of this image is said to possess miraculous healing power. This Sacred oil is considered to be a divine cure for skin ailments and also for leprosy. This oil is collected in ennaikinar oil well situated on the north east corner of this temple. This has been alluded to sage Augusta in his Tamil Book on medicine over 2000 years ago.

On the Southern side the statue of Lord Rama Keeping his arm on the shouldlers of Sukreeva and this posture shows the affection of Rama to Sukreeva in a very realistic way. Apart from this the grace and elegant dancing girl, the stone chain hanging in a corner from the roof and a stone ball rolling inside the mouth of a seated lion are the master pieces exhibiting the sculptures skill. There are about half a dozen sub-temples inside this main temple particularly for the Goddess Sri Varamangai Thayer, Andal, Lakshimi Narayana, Lakshiminaravaha, Venugopala, ten in coronations of the Lord. Alwars and saints Ramanuja and Manavalamamuni. Nammalwar is said to have merged under the holy feet of this deity. The main attraction here is the life size Kannan on the Northern wing. The first madapa inside the temple is Jeyanthi mandapa said to be build by Javanti Nayak. A little to the interior Utsavamurthis Daivanayagaye Perumal with Uma Yanaiachir, Sivwamangi Nachiar present dharshan. Veerapa Nayak Mandapa is situated on the Northern side of it on the way to oil well. Regular Poojas are conducted in the temple by hereditary Brahmin Priests.

REFERENCES
7. Sr Thodadi Manniyam, op.cit.