

**OUR ANUBHAVAM OF NAVA GARUDA SEVAI
WHICH WAS HELD ON 30/05/2001 AT ALWAR THIRUNAGARI:**

We left from Nagercoil by train and reached Tirunelveli at 9 A.M. We just took a set of clothes with us and kept the luggage in the cloak room and left by bus for Alwar Tirunagari. As it was festive season, there were plenty of buses plying towards Thiruchendur . It may be mentioned that all the buses bound to Thiruchendur goes via Azhvar Thirunagari. “Vaikasi Visagam” is the most auspicious day to both Saivaites and Srivaishnavites On this day the greatest of all Azhwars appeared on this earth. The buses were fully packed and it took 50 mintues for us to reach Thirunagari. We reached Thirunagari around 11 A.M. This otherwise calm village was overcrowded with devotees on this day. Almost all the chathirams, Ramanujar koodams and houses were fully packed with devotees who had come to witness the nava garuda sevai. Mohan mama’s house was packed with close relatives and the Elders shared a good hospitality. We kept our small luggage and left immediately as we were advised by the residents to go and wait near the entrance of the temple.

There is a big mandapam in front of the temple known as ‘PANDAL MANDAPAM’.We were told that it was built by Sri Pandala Ramaswamy Nayaakar who was responsible for starting this nava garuda Sevai utsavam in the year 1807. Hence, the mandapam is named after him as Pandal Mandapam. There were many shops on either sides of the mandapam. A huge mela (exhibition) was going on and the entire village was in a festive mood. We were fortunate to have Nammazhwar’s darsanam in the urtharadi madam. We were told that even during his life time, the Azhwar never left the place and hence that practice is followed even today. Hence all the Perumals of the Nava Tirupatis come to Thirunagari to have a look at their most beloved devotee.

Thirumanjanam for Azhvar started amongst recitation of vedic hymns. We cherished the sevai and it is still fresh in our minds. Took some lovely photos of Thirumanjanam.We were alerted by the bhagavathas that the Nava Tirupathigal Perumal have already started from their Thirukolams and after crossing the beautiful Tambaraparani River are arriving at Pandal Mandapam.We rejoiced to see Perumals coming from different directions with a troupe of Nadaswaram goshti and the recitation of pasurams by Elders. Perumal started arriving to Pandal Mandapam. Each Perumal was brought in a well decorated palanquin with full honours. Here Azhwar receives the Perumal and does Pradakshinam to Perumal thrice. Azhwar is then blessed with satari, peedambaram and prasadam which were offered to the Perumal. After this, managala aarthi was given to Perumal and Azhwar and Perumal enters the main temple. This procedure was followed for all the Perumals. This function takes place for about 2 to 3 hours.

All the Perumals assemble in a big hall/ mandapam inside the temple. We were told that this mandapam was exclusively built for this purpose. Preparations like decorating Garuda vaahanam for the evening function was going on..The bhagavathas of all the surrounding Villages contribute their might in making the function grand.We could see the Archakas kith and kin joyfully devoted in the alankaram of the palaquin and the Garuda vahanam.The devotees are very cooperative . They share a wonderful hospitality enquiring about the details of stay, food etc. Most of the Thirumalagais are eager to serve the devotees with Prasadam.

Nava Garuda sevai at Azhvar thirunagari

We were told that around 5 P.M., Thirumanjanam would start for all the Perumals. Hence, we relaxed for some time near the Mandapam listening to the devotees experiences. There were several groups well assembled in respective vans etc .The group Elder was addressing the crowd on Topics of Alwar Vaibhavams. We could see around 5 groups doing this kainkaryam and each one was unique. We were immersed in the spiritual rain. At 5 P.M., we gathered in the mandapam. Meantime, we saw some vaadiyars carrying silver kudams filled with water. We were told by the local residents that they bring water for Thirumanjanam from Tambarabarani river . The theertham for Neeratam was brought with full honours (an umbrella, music etc)Every Divya desam Perumal have their temple staff continuously attending to the function requirements.

It is interesting to note that Thirumanjanam for all the Perumals are performed at the same time. There are separate set of vaadhiyars for each Perumal. While Thirumanjanam was being performed for all the Perumals inside the mandapam, Azhwar's Thirumanjanam was also performed . It was a grand sight and it was only due to our poorva janma sukutam and our elders' blessings, we could have Thirumanjana sevai of so many Perumals at a time. It takes about 2 to 3 hours for the alankaranam to get completed. Around 8 P.M., the garuda sevai starts. In the Nava Garuda Sevai, 9 Perumals are seated on Garuda vaahanam. Azhwar is seated on a Hamsa vaahanam and his dearest devotee, Madurakavi Azhwar is seated on Pirangi Naarkaali (a chair)

Azhwar waits just outside the Maha dwaaram of the temple. The temple doors are closed and Alwar along with his favourite devotee Madurakavi Alwar wait for the Garudaseva Utsavam to happen.The Mahadwaram doors are opened amidst the music of Nadaswarams and Azhwar is the first to have darsanam of Perumal. Perumal is given Mangala karpooara aarthi and managalasaasanam done to the particular Perumal by the Azhwar . The recitation of the Mangalaasanams of Elders drives one to spiritual escastysy. Arayar Sevai is performed. For this bhattars come all the way from SriRangam. The sevai is a treat to watch. One has to closely watch Alwars Thirumukam when the Mahadwaram doors are opened. The joy in Alwars thirumukam makes one think he is a part of the Thirukurugoor.

The order in which the Perumals appear in Garuda vaahanam along with the paasuram number sung by Azhwar is given below:

PERUMAL	PASURAM NOS.
1) 1) Adinatha Perumal of Thirukurugoor	3106,3116
2) Sri Vaikuntanatha Perumal of Srivaikuntam	3571,3575
3) Sri Vijayasanar Perumal of Natham (varagunamangai)	3571
4) Sri Kaichinavendan of Thirupulingudi	3473,3568-78
5) Sri Mayakoothan of Perungulam(Thiukulandhai)	3561
6) Sri Devapiran of Irattai Tirupati	}
7) Sri Aravinda Lochanan of Irattai Tirupati	
8) Sri Bhoomipalar of Then Thirupperai	3359-3369
9) Sri Vaithamanidhi of Thirukolur along with Madurakavi Azhwar	3293-3303,3473

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After this, neivedyam is offered to Perumal, Azhwar and Madurakavi Azhwar and Perumal leaves the place . All the Perumals assemble at East Mada street and from here all the nava tirupathi Perumal are taken in procession in the 4 mada streets of Thirunagari with the Nadaswaram troupes for each perumal , Veda goshti etc. The village residents burst crackers and lit the roads with dazzling light. We could see the local residents receiving Perumal by sweeping the roads and decorating the roads with kollams etc. The zeal in their offering fruits and karpooram at the time of Perumal's oorvalam is a treat to watch. Almost the entire village are well versed with the Order of Perumals arrival. This procedure of waiting near the entrance, showing karpooara aarthi and rendering mangalasaasanam on that particular Perumal is followed for all the 9 Perumals. The excitement of the local residents when they see their Perumal cannot be expressed in words. The whole atmosphere was charged with devotional fervour and we were lucky to capture few photos. By the time the ninth Perumal Sri Vaithamanidhi of Thirukolor leaves the place, Adinatha Perumal of Thirukurugoor who left first comes back to the temple. After all the nine Perumals assemble, Azhwar pays his respects to all the Perumals and all the Perumals get inside the mandapam. Madurakavi Azhwar who has organized this function, pays his respects to Nammazwar and Nammazwar is pleased with his devotee. The function gets over around 4 A.M. the next day. One cannot imagine how the time passed so quickly

Next day morning, all the Perumals leave to their respective places and Nammazwar sees them off .

We left to Mohan Swamys place and as the house was packed we relaxed at the entrance where almost all the bhagavthas had already retired. The village atmosphere was very calm and serene. It was very easy for my wife to calm down my kids who were very tired.

By 5.30 AM we got up and quickly left to Tamparaparani river to have a holy dip which was 1 km away. The banks of the river was crowded with the pilgrims and Adiyen could see that the surroundings fully packed with SriVaishnavaites. The scenic beauty was simply marvellous. We had a wonderful time near the river and my kids were overjoyed to look at the innocent village belles grazing cows and buffaloes. We left to Temple around 6.30 AM We could notice Nammazwar 's hamsa vaahanam was placed in such a manner that he could see Perumal till he leaves the street. We had darshan of all the Perumals in the Mandapam and the send off procession was about to start with the blowing of trumpets etc. The Perumals leave the Mandapam around 7.00 –7.30 AM . Only after the sight of Perumal completely disappears, Nammazwar is taken inside. Always tirumukam has a sad look with the departure of the perumals to their respective divyadesams.

We sincerely prayed Alwar for gracing us in attending this wonderful Garudasevai. Hail Tirukurugoor I silently walk behind Alwars Palaquin asking for forgiveness and his grace in attending many more Satsangs. Now, I wish to make an attempt in comparing Nava Garuda Sevai held at Alwar Tirunagari (Pandy Naadu) with Eleven Garuda Sevai held at Thirunangoor (Chola Nadu) every year.

Nava Garuda sevai at Azhvar thirunagari

Details	9 GARUDA SEVAI	11 GARUDA SEVAI
Place	Alwar Tirunagari near Tirunelveli	Thirunangoor near Sirkazhi
Month	5 th day preceding Vaigasi Visagam	Next day after Thai Amavasai
Duration	One day	2 days-Thai Amavasai when Azhvar goes to each divya desam and next day when all the Perumals assemble
Venue	Adinathar Kovil at Thirukurugoor	Thirumani mada kovil at Thirunangoor
Perumals	From 9 Divya desams	From 11 Divya desams
Hosted by	Nammazhwar In Hanmsavahanam	Thirumangai Azhvar also in Hamsa Vahanam
1 st sevai held in	3 centuries old	2 centuries old
Supervised by	Madurakavai Azhvar in Pirangi Naarkaali (a chair)	Manavala Maamunigal in Pirangi Naarkaali (a chair)
Neeratamfor God	Simultaneously for all Perumals	In Ekaantham

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