
shrIairAvateshvarAShTottarahatanAmavAliH

श्रीऐरावतेश्वराष्टोत्तरशतनामवालिः

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From Sri Niyama Kshetra Mahatmyam

Sri Nemam – Nemam

nemam or shrI nemam is located on the southern side of the Cauvery belt in thirukaatupaLLi, Tanjore district, Tamil Nadu. Conforming to the traditions of Tamil Nadu's township pattern, a Shiva temple by name airAvateshwara, facing the east and a Vaishnav temple, facing the west is found in this place. Pleased with the staunch devotion, stupendous rituals and persistent meditation of the people, the Lord voluntarily

desired to go over to this holy place and shower His grace; and living there gives a sense of pride and happiness; His grace is carefully protected by the kshetra.

kAshI and rAmeshvaram are considered to be important kshetra-s in Bharat. People however claim that the aura in, and the importance of, this kshetra are much higher than those two. One could feel innately in this place, the divine grace of the Lord spread all over India. The kshetra enjoys the following powers:

- Proximity to the river Cauvery;
- brahmateertha, sudhA kUpam (well), baaNa kUpam and similar teerthas' capacity to purify the soul;
- The demised person's holy ash when buried, becomes a Linga to attain the realization of Shiva;
- The Lord clears the sins and sorrow of the devotee who utters His names and/or the pancAkShara mantra and purifies his body, intellect and the soul;
- The Lord's consort shrI alankAravalli, makes everyone realize that she occupies a special place in their hearts as a mother, relative and lovable divine power to attain enlightenment by the personification of Her kindness.
- She, the alankaari, manifests as the mother at every moment as alankAravalli, that Her divine grace is all-pervasive and omnipresent across

the kshetra.

Recognized by the purANAs as one among the few important kshetras, its history can be found in brahmOttara kANDA of brahmANDapurANA. shrI airAvatham iyer – kumAra swaminAtha iyer compiled its history from palm leaves and protected it in handwritten grantha lipi. His grandson, and owner of mAtangi publications, Shri S Shridharan, has now taken the responsibility of publishing this book.

Around shrI nemam, there are plenty of shivasthalAs which worship airAvateeswara as their presiding deity, some of which are: aayirathaLi, arikulakesareeshwaram, nirupakesareeshwaram, chandramalliishwaram, attupaLLi, etc. The Cauvery floods, the fight amongst the rulers closer to the place and the invasion of Malik Kafur had damaged thousands of temples, reducing this area from a mammoth town to a tiny village. With the Lord's grace, it would get back its original size and glory.

The purANAs would vouchsafe the fact that this kshetra existed in brAhma kalpa before the present svetavarAhakalpa. During the krutayuga, at the time when tirupArkadal (milk ocean) was churned to get the amrutA, a portion of this amrutA got spilled over in this place out of which a pArijAta tree sprouted to become a pArijAta vanA for the Lord to reside there; and the place to be called as pArijAta vanam, brahmapuri, indirapuri, puShpavanam,

airAvateshwaram and nemam. Elders would say that as the people were living with lot of self-restraint and discipline, the place came to be called as nemam. History would also state that these elders were able to reach the abode of the Lord for the reason that Shri ala NkAravalli voluntarily guided them to achieve the feat of bliss and enlightenment.

When a devotee of shrI alankAravalli raised his left hand to deliver his blessings to a Chozha king, the king got angry that an inappropriate protocol was observed; the devotee explained to the king that the right hand which worships the Lord had immense illumination and keerthi (fame, glory) which a human cannot bear.

The grace of shrI alankAravalli is matchless that both children and the Heavens would celebrate it with joy and happiness. Closer to nemam, there is a place called Pazhamaarneri. A resident by name mahAdeva dikShitar was a pundit and intellectual but was not very popular. He was praying to shrI alankAravalli to bless him with a child. On Her command, he went to Madurai to worship Goddess meenAkshi. At that time, Madurai was ruled by a famous king thirumalai nAyakan. He had a minister by name neelkantha dikShitar who did not honour the visitor. On learning that mahAdeva was sent by shrI alankAravalli, he rushed to pay his respects to mahAdeva and extended him a warm hospitality. This story was informed to

us by Shri Mahaperiyavaa and it is mentioned in deivathin kural, volume 4.

There is yet another story on shrI alankAravalli. You will find two deities with the same name here. Several thousand years back, either because of floods in cauvery or Malik Kafur's atrocities, the idol of shrI alankAravalli got buried in the sands. The villagers searched for it most meticulously but failed; heartbroken, they made an identical idol and started worshipping it. It so happened the original idol that got buried surfaced itself one fine day, that the villagers raised another kOShTa and installed the deity there. It seemed to be yet another inscrutable and divine play of Hers to demonstrate that both of Them were one and the same.

The crematorium in nemam is located near brahmateertham. Instead of dissolving the ash of the dead, it is buried near this teertham. The purAnA-s seek to explain that this act is much sacred and holier than dissolving the ash in Ganga.

Devotees would have the darshan of the Lord airAvateshwara from outside the temple with the illumination gained from the glittering lamp in the sannidhi. In order not to obstruct the darshan, nandikeshvar sits in a deep pit. During the times of hot summer when the river bed gets dried up, it has been noticed that if you fill up this pit with the water sinking nandikeshvar,

you do get rains to your surprise and awe.
Inasmuch the Lord can be worshipped from outside,
there is a small dvaara on the wall of the
sanctum sanctorum through which you can happily
have the darshan of shrI alankAravalli.


On the southern side of the temple, Lord
dakShinAmoorthy grants siddhi to those who
have been initiated into different mantras.
Then, you will find Lord Vishnu in His divine
posture. The amudha koopam is located on the
southern side; the brahma teertham and the
baNa teertham are located outside the temple.
Since the practice of conducting rituals near
these teerthas are not in vogue, they have
become pathetically dilapidated. Whence the
way of living of our people changes to seeking
His blessings, these teerthas, would naturally
get back their purity and sanctity.


There are seven kshetras around tiruvaiyaru
called saptasthAna kshetras. Including
nemam, the other six are: thirukAttupaLLi,
thiruchennampooNDi, thirukaanoor, vAnavarAngudi,
thiruchadaivaLandai and chendalai.

With their deep insights and experience our
elders have proved that when we worship the
Lord with love, unflinching faith and care,
He manifests himself as our Father, Mother,
Friend and Teacher (guru) as well to enhance
the value of our life.

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