

[Large Temple Chariot Nears Completion Despite Set-Backs](#)

Category : [October 1981](#)

Published by Anonymous on Oct. 02, 1981

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In September of 1979, the Ther Thiruppani Sabai launched a project to create a brand new temple chariot for the Kirupakara Sivasubramaniya Swami Kovil of Kokuvil, Sri Lanka (Kokuvil is a village two miles away from Jaffna). Now, a little over two years later, work on the chariot nears completion, despite many setbacks, including difficulty in obtaining the required types of timber, the rising costs of labor and materials, and a paucity of funds. In a recent letter, Mr. Ratnapragasam, Coordinating Secretary of the Sabai, informed us that, "The construction work is progressing satisfactorily at the workshop located in the temple courtyard in Kokuvil."

Nearly all large temples throughout Sri Lanka and South India have a temple chariot. During festival times, at each temple, the parade Deity (a Murthi or image of the God specially created for this purpose) is seated in the chariot and pulled around the perimeter of the temple in a grand procession by throngs of devotees tugging on thick ropes tied to the chariot. To be among the devotees who pull the chariot is considered a great honor, fraught with spiritual blessings from the Deity. Temple chariots are often very large, sometimes several stories tall, and may require thousands of devotees and several days to complete the festive procession around the temple. Traditionally, temple chariots are extraordinarily beautiful, plated with silver and gold and studded with precious jewels.

The Ther Thiruppani Sabai is publishing a special booklet about the chariot as a souvenir, commemorating the completion of the new chariot. In the gathering of material for this souvenir, Mr. Ratnapragasam wrote to Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, asking if His Holiness might contribute an Upanishad explaining the meaning of the temple chariot. This Gurudeva was more than happy to do, and he added, "May all those who offer their gifts and energies toward the manifestation of your Ther be blessed, for it is a worthy undertaking." We are pleased to print Gurudeva's Upanishad to the right:

"The Sacred Temple Chariot"

"It is essential that each Sivakoyil have a Ther, a chariot. Truly, the Hindu temple is the home of the God and His myriad Mahadevas and devas who attend it. The chariot is the conveyance to bring the blessings of the God beyond the inner precincts and into the heart of the community of devotees.

"In the sanctum sanctorum the pujaris invoke the God's etheric body of light, supplicating Him to come and reside in His home, the temple, there to hover over and within the stone image and bless the people. The shakti reaches all who are within the Maha Mandapam. None is neglected. All prayers are answered.

"However, there are many souls who cannot enter the sanctum, being too guilty, depressed, depraved, afraid or unable to enter the temple to receive the shakti, the blessings of the God. They remain outside, basking in the sannidhya which radiates beyond the temple doors and walls.

"It is in the golden, bejewelled, flower-bedecked chariot that the God or Goddess, invoked by the Brahmins' mystic means, leaves the sanctum sanctorum and hovers over the holy image in an etheric body, riding 'round the temple. Thus it is that the worthy, those who think themselves unworthy, the religious and unreligious alike are allowed to see and be blessed by the Deity. The entire city, yea the world itself, is blessed each time the Ther goes 'round. None is neglected. All prayers are answered. The Great Coachmen, the bhaktas or devotees, who lovingly arrange the Ther for its travels are thrice blessed.

"And so it is that the Thiru Koyil, home for Gods and Goddesses, radiates its sanctity out into the world through the Ther, Chariot of the Gods, holy conveyance of spiritual energies. No temple is complete without the golden, glided, beautifully bejewelled chariot. The entire world will proclaim the rare blessings received as it goes 'round and 'round and 'round."

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