

## [Malaysia Celebrates Thai Pusam](#)

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Thai Pusam celebrates the giving of the Shakti Vel, the lance-like symbol of spiritual knowledge and incisive discrimination, to Lord Muruga by Parvati, the female or creative aspect of God Siva. The word "Thai" denotes the Tamil month of January/February and the word "pusam" refers to one of the stars in Hindu astrology.

In Malaysia, Thai Pusam is celebrated on a grand scale, three days of glorious spirituality. This year, on the first day about four thousand devotees gathered at the Maha Mariamman Temple, Kuala Lumpur, as early as 4:00 am to witness the puja (prayer service) and rituals to cleanse and bless the chariot of Lord Muruga pulled by two oxen. After prayers of invocation, the chariot started its journey of several miles. Along the route, music and songs were sung by devotees who broke thousands of coconuts, denoting shattering of ego. The chariot reached its destination after an arduous ten-hour journey. Those who experienced the event felt that devotees and the country had been blessed.

On the second day, the actual day of Thai Pusam, about three thousand devotees carried various type of kavadi. Men, women and children carrying kavadi and chanting "vel, vel" to the rhythmic beat of drums while gaily decorated kavadies twirled in the hot sun were some of the spectacular sights at Batu Caves where about six hundred thousand devotees came to offer prayers and fulfil their vow.

Among the several foreigners who took the vow of carrying kavadi (a difficult form of penance) and climb the 272 steps to offer their prayers were Australian Carl Vadivella Belle, his wife Wendy Valli and their daughter Natalia. Vadivella had a vision of Muruga in a dream. He vowed to carry kavadi five times within ten years but fulfilled his vow within seven years. Vadivella carried a large kavadi with 108 spikes and skewers piercing his body. His wife and daughter carried the milk kavadi - a wooden arch, with silver containers of milk at each end.

Other major cities in Malaysia also celebrated Thai Pusam on a grand scale. In the northern town of Ipoh, 100,000 devotees participated and about 500 devotees took kavadi. In Penang several thousand gathered at Arulmigu Balathandayuthabani Temple. In Sarawak 1,500 Hindus of the 2,500 took part in a two-hour procession, the largest so far in that area.

On the third and final day at Batu Caves, the image of Lord Muruga was carried back to Sri Maha Mariamman Temple. Thus, once again the Lord of spirituality and religion came out to bless one and all.

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