

महालिङ्ग विभो

Thiruvaidaimarudur Ratham (Ther) Project details in Pujya Swamiji's own words reproduced.

Another project that I have recently launched is the Thiruvaidaimarudur Ther (Chariot) Project. I have recently founded a trust consisting of eminent persons of Tamilnadu with the main objective of preserving the various forms of declining fine arts of our country. These fine arts include wooden and granite sculptures, traditional painting, folk music and dance, puppetry etc. This trust, registered as Sri Mahalingaswami Seva Trust, has taken up as its first project the construction of five wooden rathas (chariots) for Sri Mahalingaswami Temple situated at Thiruvaidaimarudur near the famous temple town of Kumbakonam in Thanjavur District of Tamilnadu.

Thiruvaidaimarudur, a great sivasthalam, is known as madhyarjunam and is said to be on par with Benares. The Sri Mahalingaswami Temple's sprawling campus is bejeweled with lofty towers and ornate mandapams. The colossal Nandi is a distinct and inspiring feature at the temple. This temple is associated with Kulottunga Chola I, Varaguna Pandyan etc. Thiruvaidaimarudur is one of the Thevaara Paadal Petra Sthalams and is considered to be the 30th in the series of Tevara fame temples in the Chola kingdom. Among the temple rathas of Tamilnadu, the Thiruvaidaimarudur temple rathas are very famous. The main ratha of Sri Mahalingaswami is one of the biggest rathas like Thiruvarur temple ratha. Due to various reasons, all the five rathas disintegrated over time and there has been no rathotswa at the Thiruvaidaimarudur temple for the past 74 years.

With the gracious consent of the Gurumahasannidhanam of Thiruvavaduthurai Adheenam, the Mutt, which manages this Temple, I have taken up the mammoth task of building the five rathas through this newly formed Trust. The five rathas are, respectively, for Lord Mahalingaswami, Goddess Brahad Sundarakumbika, Lord Ganesa, Lord Subrahmanya and Lord Chandikeswara. The total cost of renovation, which includes building the rathas, ratha-stations and establishing a corpus for the annual running of the rathas, is estimated to be about \$1.2 million. Rathotsawa in our country is not only a religious celebration but it is also a social function, which brings together people from all walks of the society. It not only invokes the grace of the Lord but also generates mutual love, respect, and goodwill among different communities of our ancient land.

Luckily there are still a handful of artisans who are well versed in the art of ratha construction, living near this ancient town. The construction of the five rathas generates job opportunities for these artisans and also accomplishes the significant feat of preserving this art culture by providing a great opportunity for the artistically talented youth in the town to get trained in the fine art of wooden sculptures.

Sri Mahalingashwara Swami Chariot



SriAmbal Chariot

SriVigneswara Chariot



SriSubrahmanya Chariot

SriChandikeswara Chariot

Three Chariots in the night

