

The Naguleswaran Kovil

A pooja in progress

Sivalingams

A damaged section

The Island  
**Leisure LAND**  
 Wednesday 25th March, 2009

# Rays of Triple Gem in Jaffna from times ancient



Interior



An ancient Chariot

by **Dasun Edirisinghe**  
 recently in Jaffna

**T**he Hindu religious history

reveals that the Lingams worshiped by one Paanaasuran with his thousand and eight hands during the period of the Tamil Sangham administration are in the river Sindhu. One hundred and eight such Lingams are brought down now to this place of worship and kept for prayers. May the devotees of our lordship worship the Lingams now and gain the blessings of the Triple Gem."

So reads a board which is the first thing one sees while entering the Naguleswaran Siva Kovil at Kankasanthurai, Jaffna. The Kovil has been in the peninsula's High Security Zone, but this fact has not disturbed the religious activities taking place in the Kovil. Around 15 journalists from Colombo visited the Kovil with the help of personnel at the KKS Naval Base and Jaffna Security Forces Headquarters. The Naguleswaran Kovil is a popular and highly venerated Kovil inside the Jaffna HSZ.

Kurukkal of the Kovil, who is of Indian descent, was waiting for half an hour to welcome us. He warmly welcomed us and narrated the Kovil's history. The silver-haired holy man lamented about the damage the temple suffered at the hands of the LTTE in 1990.

"There are five such Kovils in Sri Lanka in Dondra in Matara, Trincomalee, Mannar, Chilaw and KKS. But the Dondra Kovil was washed away to the sea. Our Kovil also had to face an LTTE attack on October 16, 1990. At the time they attacked the Kovil, there was a pooja and around 2,000 devotees in the Kovil. Three bombs were hurled at the Kovil and thanks to God Siva, no deaths occurred," he said.

The Kurukkal said that while the LTTE

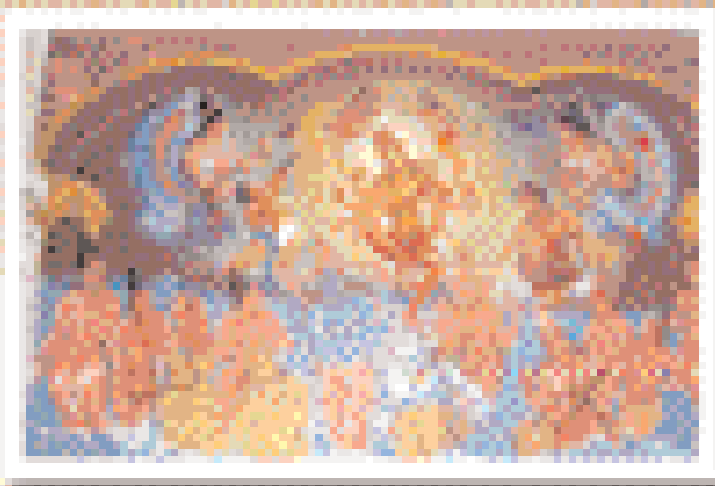
shelled and fired the custodians of the temple fled. Then they moved to India and came back in 1996.

"After the liberation of the Jaffna peninsula by the then President Chandrika Kumaratunge, we came back to the Kovil. We came with the Government Agent of Jaffna. Unfortunately, the Kovil was severely damaged. There were some big trees in the Kovil premises. There was no roof and rainwater damaged the murals, woodworks etc. Money and the valuables in the Kovil were lost," he said.

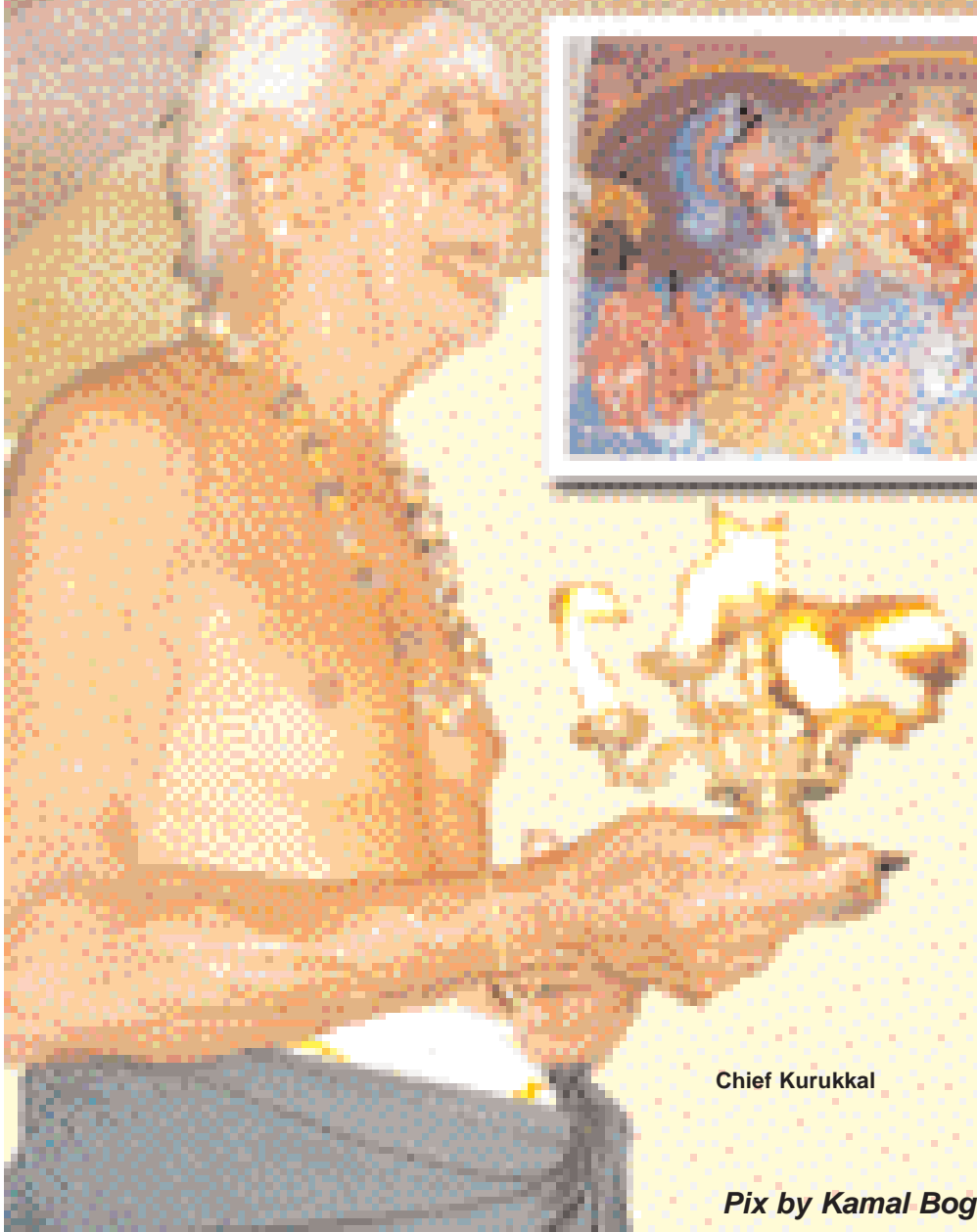
The government in 1996 supported upliftment of the Kovil from that stage and devotees from the United Kingdom and Canada contributed funds for renovations. The reconstruction of the Kovil is yet to be completed. "Present Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa suddenly visited the Kovil recently and he promised to grant three million rupees to complete reconstruction of the Kovil. We bought 1,000 Sivalingams recently from Mahabalipuram, India," he said.

The 84-year-old Kurukkal reminisced of what happened twenty five years ago. About 100,000 devotees used to attend the Saturday pooja at this Kovil. But, today, only a few hundreds do so for security reasons. However, massive crowds visited the Kovil during the last Maha Siva Rathri period. The Sri Lanka Army provided full security while the Navy provided security for the ancient water cutting ceremony at the KKS sea.

"From Sunday to Friday, we have a pooja at 9.30 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. The Saturday poojas are held at 11.30 am and 1.30 pm. Some days there are still two, three buses of devotees coming from the Sinhala areas, too," he said, adding that he was expecting more people from the South after the re-opening of the Jaffna - Kandy A9 road for civilians.



A mural



Chief Kurukkal

Pix by Kamal Bogoda



**Bees and ants are 'model citizens'**

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**German Electronic Music Band: 'Mouse on Mars'**