

Thirunelli

By

P.R.Ramachander

This is a famous temple in Kerala where the worship of Pithrus (manes) is done. It is 32 Km from the Manandavadi town of Vayanad district, which is a dense tribal area of Kerala. The nearest Railway station is Kozhikode in Kerala, which is 72 Km from this place. It is in a valley called “Brahma Giri” (Mountain of Brahma)

It is believed that Lord Brahma did a great fire sacrifice here and because of that, this place is divine. According to legends, once upon a time, some Brahmins happened to travel through these dense forests. When they were very hungry and had nothing to eat, they called Lord Vishnu for their help. Then they saw a goose berry tree. (Called Nelli in Malayalam), which was laden with fruits. All of them satiated their hunger by eating fruits of this tree. Suddenly their hunger and thirst was satiated and they felt the divine presence. Then they decided to call the place as “Thiru Nelli (sacred Gooseberry). “

Records exist to prove that this temple of Lord Vishnu is at least 1000 years old. It is also referred in Unni neeli Charitham which is the first book written in Malayalam.

The temple is a very simple structure made of granite stone. The idol consecrated in this temple is that of Lord Vishnu with four arms. The walls of this temple are also made of granite. On these walls, very beautiful etchings are there. It seems one king of Coorg, tried to renovate this temple. When he was half through, the Vellattiri king who owned the temple objected. The renovation was discontinued. Even today we can see proof of the half finished renovation work. There are no wells in this temple. Water is being brought by a stone aqueduct from a stream in the Brahma Giri valley.

Very near the temple, there is a river called Papa Nasini(killer of sins). It is believed that if we do rituals to the manes (pithrus), they would get salvation. It is believed that the good effect is equivalent to doing Karmas(Rituals) in Gaya. The Pindas (rice balls) are placed in the stream after the worship. People believe that both Lord Rama and Lord Parasurama did the Pithru Karmas here Also in the vicinity is a sacred rock where ritual offerings (known as bali) are made for the ancestors on the New Moon days of the Malayalam months Karkkidakom, Thulam and Kumbham. Besides the rituals during the two-day festival, art forms like Kathakali and Ottanthullal are performed. Very near the Papa Nasini is the Padma Theertha pond. . In the middle of it on a raised stone, you find the marks of Lord Vishnu’s feet. People believe that Lord Vishnu stood on this rock and gave divine advice to Lord Brahma. Nearby in a cave there is a Shiva temple also. All the people who do Pithru Karma visit this temple on their way back.

There is a great lodge called “Thirunelli Agraharam” in these sylvan surroundings. Its address is

**Address**

Yatri Nivas Road  
Thirunelli Temple Post  
Manathavadi, Wayanad  
Kerala - 670646  
India

