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Sri Nithyakalyani Amman Thunai

SUMANGALI PRAARATHANAI



An attempt to take forward the traditional spiritual practices of Thappalampuliyur village not only for this generation but also for future generations...



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SUMANGALI PRAARTHANAI

1) Why is it performed?

Families regularly celebrate this important, auspicious function called Sumangali Praarthanai (Puja done to ladies (Sumangalis) who are currently married, in memory of ancestors). It is very special because it is a prayer and



Swamy Alankaaram

offering to all the female ancestors in the family who passed away before their husbands (as Sumangalis). It is important to celebrate it at least once in 2-3 years. Apart from this, when there is a joyous occasion in the family [like a wedding of son or daughter, Upanayanam (Poonal), Shashtiabdapoorthi (60th birthday), Sadabhishekam (80th birthday) etc.,] this prayer/celebration precedes the joyous occasion for the well being of the entire family. However in case of a daughter's marriage, this prayer is usually done before the wedding and if the son is getting married, it is done later. This way, the new daughter-in-law can also take part in this, as a member of the family.

Similarly, when moving into an own house, this is usually the very first good occasion that is performed.

Discipline, hygiene, devotion and fervour is very important while performing this puja, as it is performed by inviting our lady ancestors, who have passed away and are in a good place now, and pray to them, similar to a Shraardhaa (thevasam).

The main purpose of this puja is for the welfare of the entire family. It is also to celebrate the joyous occasions without confronting obstacles and in a smooth and auspicious manner with the blessings of elders who have passed away. In every village, each family will have their own traditional way of celebrating this particular Praarthana. So, it is recommended to take the inputs from elders of the family if there are any specific things/rules in your family to follow. Traditional guidelines followed by most in our village is given below.

2) Which days can it be performed?

- ❖ Good days to perform - Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays
- ❖ Months to avoid - In Tamil calendar – Aadi (mid July-mid August), Purattasi (mid September-mid October), Aippasi (mid October-mid November), Maargazhi (mid December-mid January).
- ❖ Days to avoid - Saturdays, Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. If there are no auspicious dates right before the wedding or the joyous occasion, it is ok to celebrate it on Thursdays or Sundays, but not on Saturdays or Tuesdays.
- ❖ Nakshatras to avoid - Bharani, Karthigai (Kruthika), Ayilyam, Kettai (Jyeshtha)
- ❖ Thithis to avoid - Amavasya {New Moon day (NM)}, Pournami {(Full Moon day(FM))}, Prathama (1st day after NM or FM), Ashtami (8th day after NM or FM), Navami (9th day after NM or FM), Ekadasi (11th day after NM or FM), Dwadasi (12th day after NM or FM) chaturdasi (14th day after NM or FM).
- ❖ Other days to avoid - First day of the (all) tamil month, Mahalaya Paksham, days with Marana yogam, days that say Kari naal.

- ❖ Make sure that the time that the ladies are made to sit in their respective places does not fall in the Rahukalam or Yamakan-dam time of each day.

3) Necessary Items to Procure:

- ◆ Swami vastram - a 9 yards sari and blouse piece, that do not have any black thread for main puja (preferably cotton or silk).
- ◆ For giving to the Sumangalis assembled: Betel leaf, betel nuts,, turmeric pieces/powder, kumkum powder, sandalwood paste. In individual gift bags for each invited Sumangali: Mirror, comb, Marudhaani Paste (Henna), flowers, bananas and or other fruits, money for gift (Dakshinai - upto your budget), blouse piece, any other gift items you want to add to this.
- ◆ “Kaalaanchi” – (Refer ”Method of preparation for Some specific Items” given at the end)
- ◆ Qty of Gingelly oil, Shikakai and Turmeric root for all sumangalis (In case If you are in a position to go and invite each of the ladies the previous day to come and participate in this function)
- ◆ Normally one or two kanyas (young girls who have not started their monthly cycle yet) will also be invited to take part in this puja. There is a custom of buying new clothes for them. They will also be part of the head count for the number of banana leaves (ilai) for sumangalis in Praarthanai.
- ◆ Long garlands of flowers (jasmine or similar sweet smelling flower) to adorn the sari kept in the puja, Red colour honey flower (Vrukshi), marikozhundu, davanam etc., for archana are very special for doing this Praarthanai (puja.)
- ◆ A full banana leaf (nuni ilai) has to be laid down for each of the ladies present. One Nuni Ilai is to be put for swami also.

4) Details About Eligibility of Ladies to Sit for This Praarthana (Puja)

❀ There must be odd number of ladies sitting (eg., 5,7,9,11 etc), including the Swami ilai and all the kanyas (girls.). All Married (Sumangali) ladies including daughter(s)/daughter(s) in law of the family as well as sumangali ladies who are relatives and family friends are eligible to sit.

❀ If it is the first pregnancy of a sumangali, (all inclusive of family daughters/daughter in laws) they cannot sit after 4th month of pregnancy. If it is second pregnancy onwards, they cannot sit after the 5th month of pregnancy.

❀ If there has been a death in the family of the lady, then she is normally not made to sit for a year after the death.

5) Menu for the Puja: (Some families in Thappalam-puliur Follow This - Please Check with your Elders about your Family's Menu)

1) Paruppu (Dhaal) Payasam with jaggery

2) Thayir (Curd) pachadi

3) Mangai (Mango) pachadi

4) Thani Kootu this is the most important item. (For Recipe Refer "Method of preparation for Some specific Items" given at the end)

5) Four types of Other Vella (Jaggery) Koottu: Normally Yellow squash(Parangikkai), Snake gourd(Pudalangai), white/winter gourd(Pooshanikkai), plantain(vazhaikkai) or similar vegetables of your choice can be used to make four other Vella (Jaggery) kootu, apart from one thani kootu. (Usually, we make the thani kootu as

per the recipe below, divide it into 5 portions. Four different vegetables are boiled with salt and turmeric powder separately, squeeze the excess water and add one portion of the thani kootu to make each kootu, the fifth portion will be Thanikootu). Hence totally there will be 4 vegetable with Vella (jaggery) kootu and one thani kootu.

6) Mangai (Mango) pickle

7) Dosai milagai podi (Dosai Chilli Powder)

8) Medu vada

9) Athirasam

10) Kalathukku paruppu (boiled tur dhal with a pinch of salt), ghee

11) Rice (cooked)

12) Kathirikkai (brinjal/eggplant) sambar

13) Ladysfinger/okra or winter/ash gourd morekuzhambu

14) Jeera rasam

15) Curd/yogurt

16) After serving payasam second time (after rasam rice), milk, paanakam (jaggery water with lemon juice, dry ginger powder and elaichi powder) and neer more (watered buttermilk) should be served individually.

6. PROCEDURE FOR CONDUCTING THE PRAARTHANAI

To obtain the blessings of the women ancestors who passed away as Sumangalis, we have to follow these steps.

A) Early in the morning of the day of the Praarthanai, clean and mop the area, in front of Swamy, (in your normal Pooja Room/ Pooja Place) draw Izhai Kolam with wet rice flour (soak rice for an hour and grind it in the mixie until soft). Once Izhai Kolam dries, place a wooden board (Palagai), { which has already been decorated with Izhai Kolam and dried off} over this kolam put on the

floor. A lamp should be lit next to it. Also keep some flowers and gingelly oil next to it. Unfold the new sari and blouse piece bought for this occasion, pleat it and place it on top of the wooden board. The person who is performing the Praarthana should sprinkle some gingelly oil on top of the pleated sari and offer some flowers on it too. Then, after taking a head bath, she should take the sari and blouse piece and soak it in water, wring the water off and let it dry in a place where no one will touch it (madi).

B) In the place where the Praarthana Sari is going to be kept, (the place to be in the same row where Sumangalis are going to be seated for eating) put Izhai Kolam and, place a wooden board that has been decorated with Izhai kolam already. On top of that, arrange the dry sari and blouse piece in a decorative manner. Place a mirror behind the arranged sari. Then decorate the sari and blouse with jasmine and other sweet smelling flower garlands, loose flowers and gold jewellery to give a divinely look. (Henceforth this arrangement will be called as Swamy Ilai in the description).

C) Arrange the following items around the area where the Swamy ilai will be:

1. Lit lamps (Kuthu Vilakku) -, 2. Sandalwood paste, 3. pot (sombu) filled with water, 4. panagam and neer more, in individual pots, 5. One set of gift bag of items mentioned earlier including Betel leaf and Betel Nut, 6. money offering (Dakshinai along with one or more coins), 7. Dry ginger powder, Jaggery and Marudhaani Paste (henna), 8. coconut broken into two pieces, 9. Nalangu manjal (turmeric powder mixed with a pinch of sunnambu (chunna edible lime) and a little water and made into a thick paste to decorate the feet of the sumangalis) 10. Vadai, athirasam made that morning as per the menu and lot of different fruits.

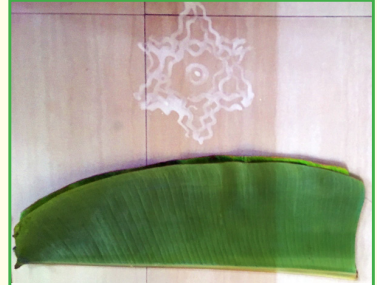
7. HOW TO INVITE THE SUMANGALIS FOR THE PRAARTHANAI.

◆ Each of the ladies can be invited personally the previous day to come and participate in this function. At that time, you give them some kumkum and a turmeric root in their hands. You will also give Gingelly oil and Shikakai powder. But while giving these two items (Gingelli oil & Shikakai) they should be left aside on the floor/in a place, instead of directly handing over to them on hand. These are for their usage during their head bath the next morning before coming to your home. If you are not able to visit them, invite them by phone and please ask them to take an oil bath before coming for the Praarthanai. Make sure you give some money to compensate for the oil and shikakai powder along with your Dhakshinai. Moreover, when you invite them, please request them to wash and dry a 9 yards sari and blouse and wear that without touching anyone else(madi),when they come to your house for Praarthanai.

◆ When the Sumangalis arrive in the morning, please give them a grand welcome as if you are inviting the celestial beings of your ancestors. Smile and welcome them warmly. Give them some turmeric powder and ask them to wash their hands and feet before entering. Once they enter, offer them sandalwood paste and kumkum and flowers to make them feel special.

◆ Then, starting with the Swami ilai, put as Many number Izhai Kolam as you have invited the number of sumangalis (Including Kanyas & Swami Ilai). Make sure that all the banana leafs are laid on top of the dried izhai kolams. While laying banana leaf, it is very important to make sure that the top of the banana leaf (nuni) should be on the left side of the person sitting.

◆ Once the banana leaves are in place, we should make sure they are all sprinkled with some water, wiped down and a drop of ghee is put on each of them to ready them for serving (process of abhigaaram).



Method of putting izhai kolam and Nuni Ilai

◆ Then, starting from Swami Ilai all items have to be served in all Leaves.

Once the Cooked rice (Annam) is served, Request all the Sumangalis to stand right outside the entrance of the house. The person conducting the Praarthana, then takes aarti to all of them and calls out the names of all the Sumangali ancestors to invite them in. Hold each person's hand, lead them and seat them in front of each of the banana leaves. While seating them, daughter(s) of the lady who performs Praarthana should be seated according to their seniority starting from the leaf next to the Swami ilai.

◆ Once every one is seated, show sambraani (smoke from a special incense), Doopam and Deepam to Swami (decorated sari with mirror) and also the seated ladies - Sumangalis. Then do neivedyam to the Swami ilai.



Serving Swamy Ilai"



**Seating Kanya(s)
Along with Sumangali**



**Swamy
Deepaaraathanai**



**Sumangalis
Deepaaraathanai**



**Aabhojanam for
Sumangali”**

◆ At this time, the male members in the home can come and do a namaskaaram to the Swami ilai.

◆ Then, offer “Aabhojanam” to Sumangalis (pouring water in the Palm of sumangalis hand with Udhdharani) and ask them to circle it around the leaf clockwise and drink a drop of it.

◆ Request the Sumangalis to start eating now.

◆ Serve them in the traditional way of sambar, morekuzhambu, rasam, payasam, milk, panagam, neer more, rice with curd, while asking in between if they need refills of the vegetables and bakshanam.



Sumangalis Eating



**Applying Nalangu Manjal and
Thamboolam offering for Kanya(s)**

8. What to do after the Sumangalis have finished their food:

I) Once they finish their eating and wash their hands, ask them to be seated in a different place, apply Nalangu Manjal in the feet of sumangalis. Then Offer them the mixture of jaggery and dry ginger powder for easy digestion.

II) After this , also offer them some Marudhaani Paste (Henna) to apply in their hands, the kaalaanji and extra betel leaves and nuts to chew on.

III) Then, present them individually with their gift bags.

IV) Present the Swami ilai sari to the designated recipient (usually the daughter or in case of son's marriage, to the newly wed) and ask them to wear it at an auspicious time and get blessings from God and all the elders by doing namaskaram wearing the new sari. Some families present the sari to a Sumangali who is not a family member, according to their family tradition.

☆ **Compiled with the help of Jayam Mami and Meenakshi Mami.**

☆ **English Translation by Mrs. Meenakshi Venkataramani, USA**



**Applying Nalangu Manjal and
offering Sowbhaagya
Diraviyam to Sumangalis**



**Offering Swamy Sari to
Home Daughter**

METHOD OF PREPARATION FOR SPECIFIC ITEMS

Recipe for "Thani kootu":(serves 25-30 people)

Ingredients:

- 1) Thur dhal - 200 gm
- 2) Channa dhal - 200 gm
- 3) Jaggery (paagu vellam) - 2 kgs (powdered)
- 4) Fully ripe (muthina) coconut - 2 (grated)
- 5) Dry red chillies - 4
- 6) Turmeric powder - 2 tsp
- 7) Rice flour - 2 Tbsp (Kuzhikkarandi)
- 8) Tamarind - gooseberry size ball (nellikaai alavu urundai)
- 9) Salt - 1 pinch
- 10) For tempering/seasoning: Coconut oil - 200gm, Ghee - 200 gm, Mustard seeds - 25 gm, Urad dhal (broken/split white) - 200 gm, Curry leaves - a handful



Preparation: Roast the Thur dhal and Channa dhal with a spoonful of oil until they change color and soak in water with 4 dry red chillies. After they are well soaked (they should be soft and easily broken), grind them until soft. In a separate container, soak the tamarind and extract the juice, add turmeric powder and salt, 1 tbsp of Channa dhal and 4 tbsp of coconut oil and let it boil. Once the raw smell is gone, pour the ground dhal and let it boil more while stirring often. You can add a little more water if needed. Then add the powdered jaggery, some coconut oil and ghee and keep stirring continuously. When it is the consistency of dosa dough, sprinkle the rice flour slowly and keep stirring until it does not stick to the sides of the pan. Pour a little more of the coconut oil and ghee and remove it from the heat.

Now, add the grated coconut to some hot coconut oil on the stove and roast it until it turns red or dries out and changes colour. Temper the mustard seeds, urad dhal and curry leaves and add all of these to the thani kootu that is waiting. Put it back on the stove and stir with more ghee and coconut oil until it becomes almost like loose chapati dough.

Now divide it into 5 parts. Leave one part alone as it is. Add each of the other 4 parts with one vegetable that has been boiled with salt and turmeric powder separately and squeezed of any excess water.

"KAALANJI"

This is a special way of folding 2 betel leaves with some betel nuts, cloves and elaichi pods. Remove the ends of 2 betel leaves and turn them so their backs are on top. Add some betel nuts, 2 cloves and an elaichi pod and close the top leaf over all these to make a packet. Then, put it on top of the other leaf and fold both sides in and tie it with a string or banana string (naar). Some families use a clove to button it up, instead of tying it together. (Please see the pictures for easy understanding.)

