

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

For Tamil Saivites across the world, Chidambaram Sr Sabhanayagar Temple is known as “the Koyil” or “the Temple”.

This Temple of Sri Nataraja at Chidambaram where the Lord performs his Cosmic Dance in the Hall of Wisdom.

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# Shiva's Cosmic Dance



**JUN 2004**

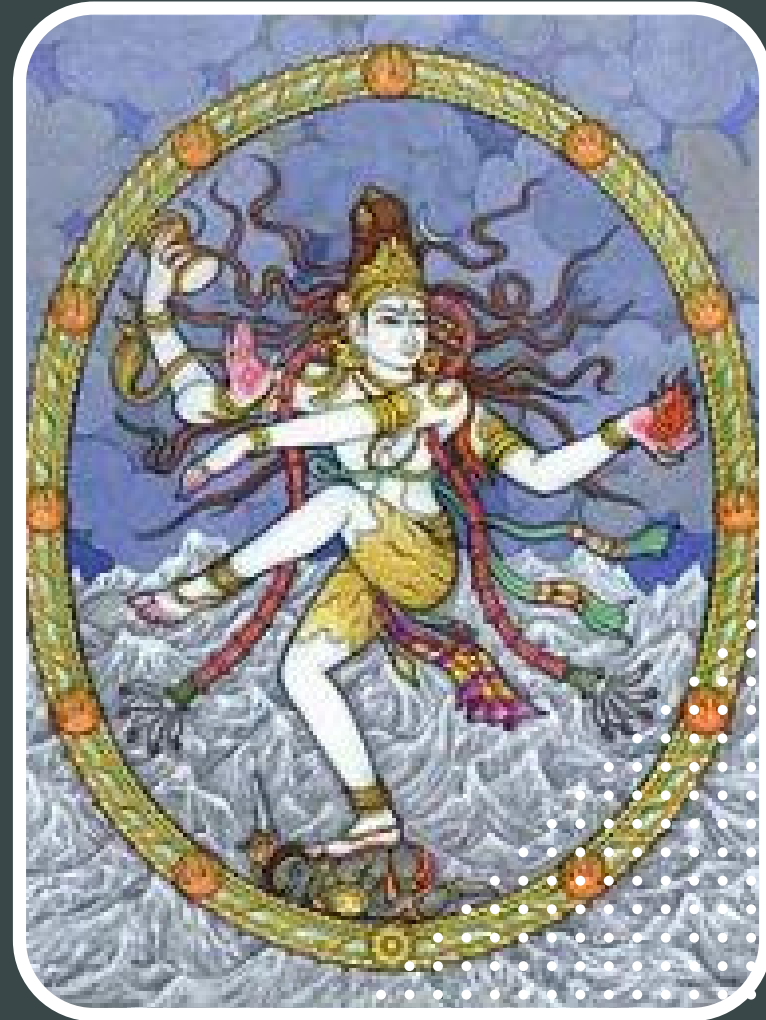
**On June 18, 2004, an unusual new landmark was unveiled at CERN, a 2m tall statue of the Indian deity Shiva Nataraja, the Lord of Dance.**

**The statue, symbolizing Shiva's cosmic dance of creation and destruction, was given to CERN by the Indian government to celebrate the research center's long association with India.**

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# Chidambaram Temple

Om  
Nama  
Shivaya

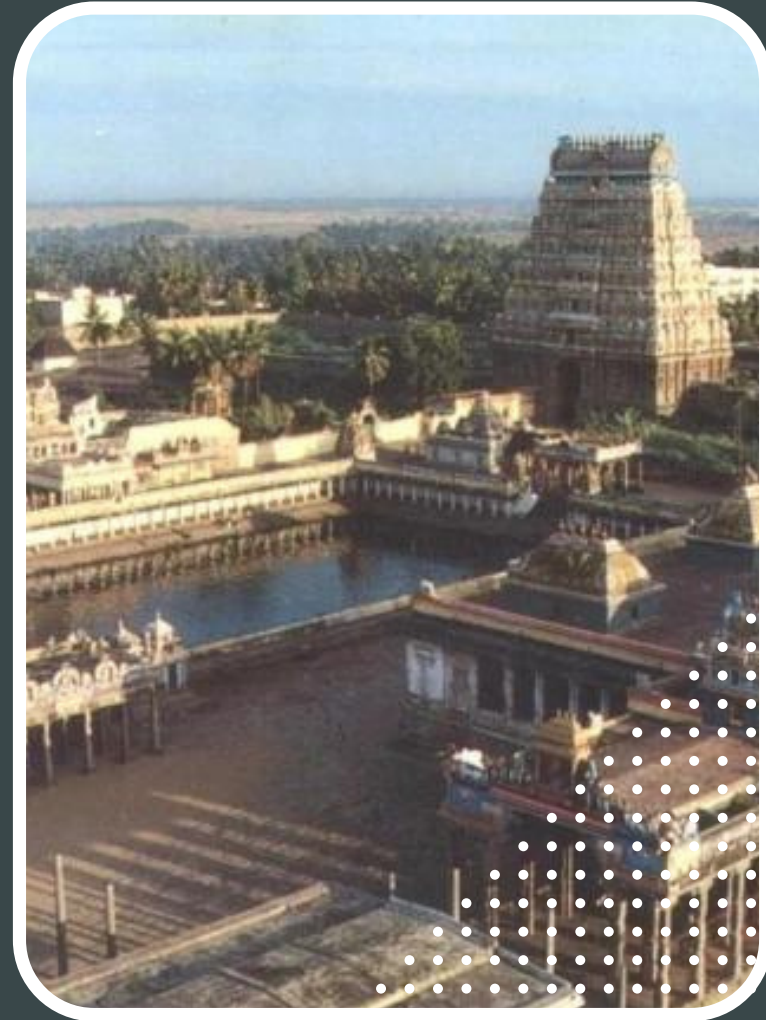


## HISTORY

The Siva Jyoti present in the Sivalinga of every other Siva temple converge in Nataraja, The words **Chitrambalam, Chidambaram, Tiruvambalam and Podu** all denote that this place of worship was only the Dancing Hall of Siva in the beginning.

↓ READ MORE BELOW

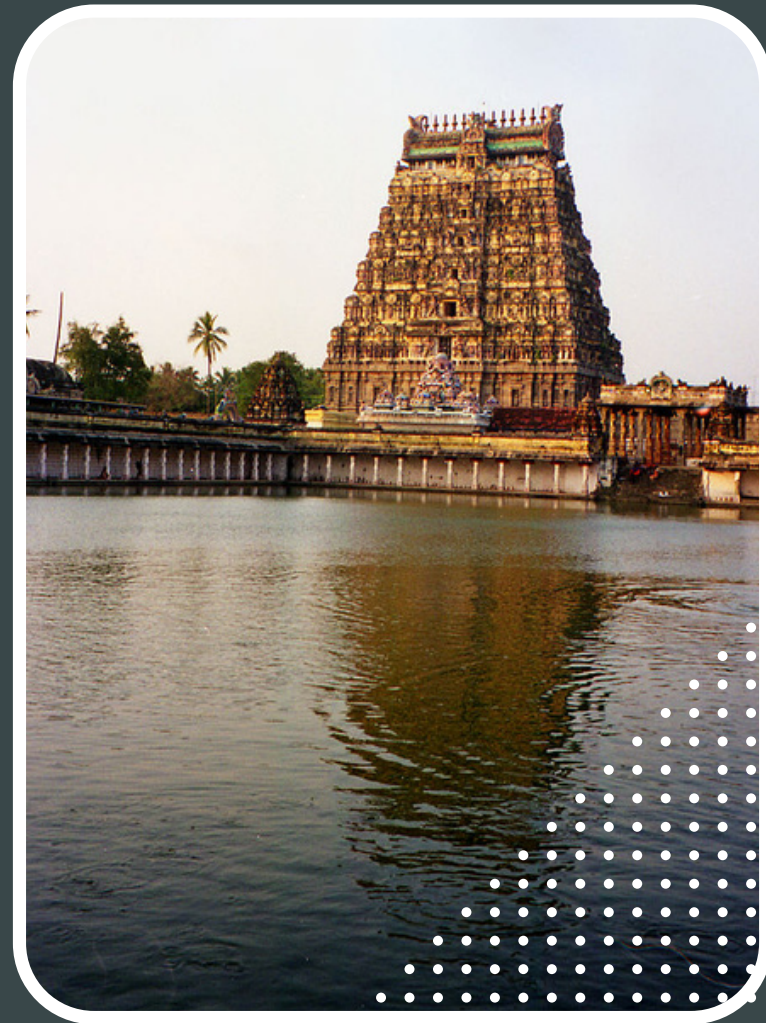
# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

**Origin of Sri Sabhanayagar Temple** “Sri Sabhanayagar Temple or Sri Nataraja Temple in Chidambaram is an ancient temple of great importance to Saivites all over India.” **Statement of Case by Government of Madras**

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

“This Temple is very ancient one and apart from Epical history no historical evidence could be traceable in respect of the details of its founding and age.” **Chidambaram temple is a hoary temple** that goes back to the **period of Sages Patanjali and Vyagrapadha.**

# Chidambaram Temple

Om  
Nama  
Shivaya



## HISTORY

**“The Koyil”** rose on an ancient site, some of the inner portions being of the remotest antiquity, **was preserved with care by the Podu Dikshitaras and enriched by Kings of yore through the efforts of the Podu Dikshitaras.**

↓ READ MORE BELOW

# Chidambaram Temple

Om  
Nama  
Shivaya



## HISTORY

As the Temple grew in size, importance and fame, the town too grew big and became a 'Taniyur', an independent self-governing town.

By that time (and now) the Temple Complex comprised an area of almost 40 acres.

↓ READ MORE BELOW

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

This uniformity has been possible only due to the continuous **presence and administration of the Podu Dikshitar**s from the inception of the temple. The innermost part of the temple where the **Dancing Hall of the Lord** is present is a very ancient structure that is very early in tradition.

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

It is a wooden structure in rectangular shape with a thatched roof covered with gold leaves. Such a style is unknown or cannot be seen in other temples in Tamil Nadu. The closest resemblance to this structure is found in a relief panel from Nagarjunakonda, north of Tamil Nadu & dates from about the 3rd century.

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

### Citrambalam

The gold-roofed stage or dancing hall is the sanctum sanctorum of the Chidambaram temple & houses the Lord in three forms: the 'form' or anthropomorphic form of Lord Nataraja, called the Sakala thirumeni

# Chidambaram Temple

Om  
Nama Shivaya



## HISTORY

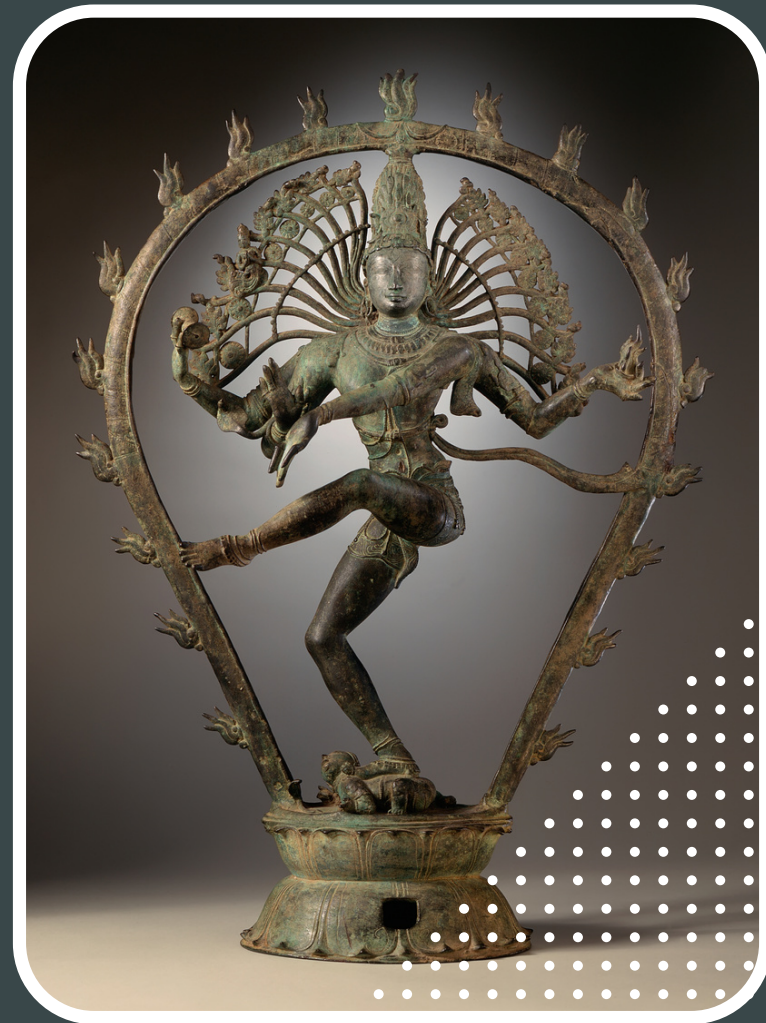
the 'semi-form' or semi-anthropomorphic form as Crystal linga  
Chandramouleswarar, the Sakala nishkala thirumeni

the 'formless' as the Space in Chidambara Rahasyam, an empty space  
within the sanctum sanctorum, the Nishkala thirumeni

↓ READ MORE BELOW

# Chidambaram Temple

Om  
Nama  
Shivaya



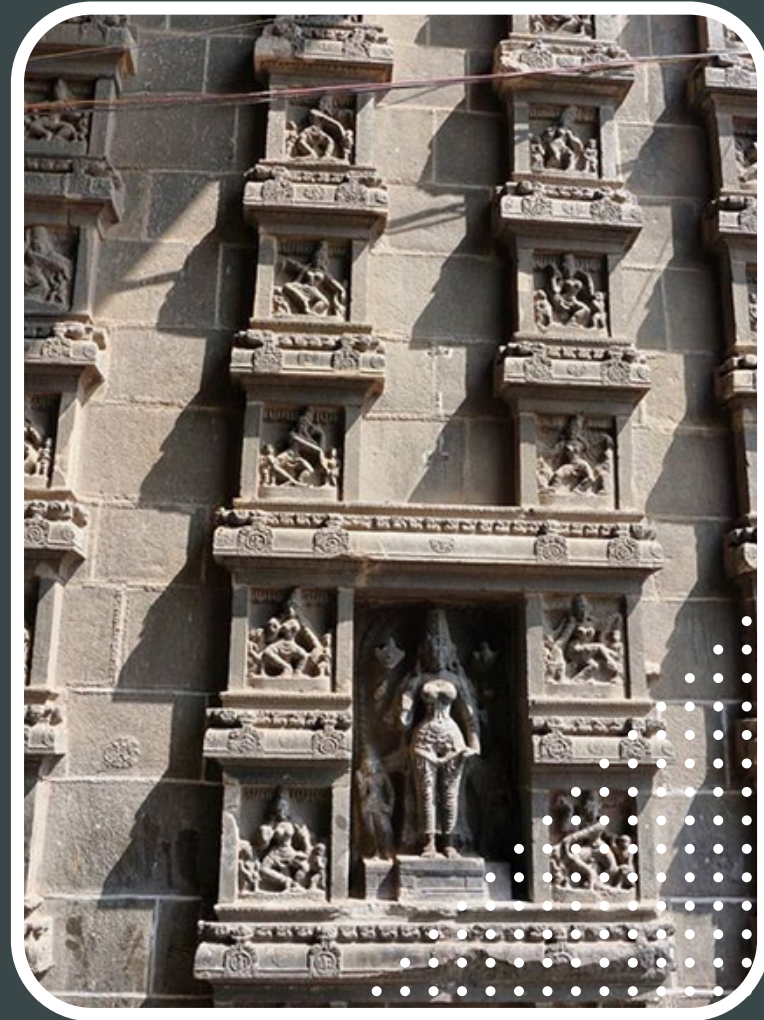
## HISTORY

### The Dancing Lord

**“Every part of the Nataraja image is directly expressive not of any superstition or dogma, but of evident facts - Dr. S. Radhakrishnan**

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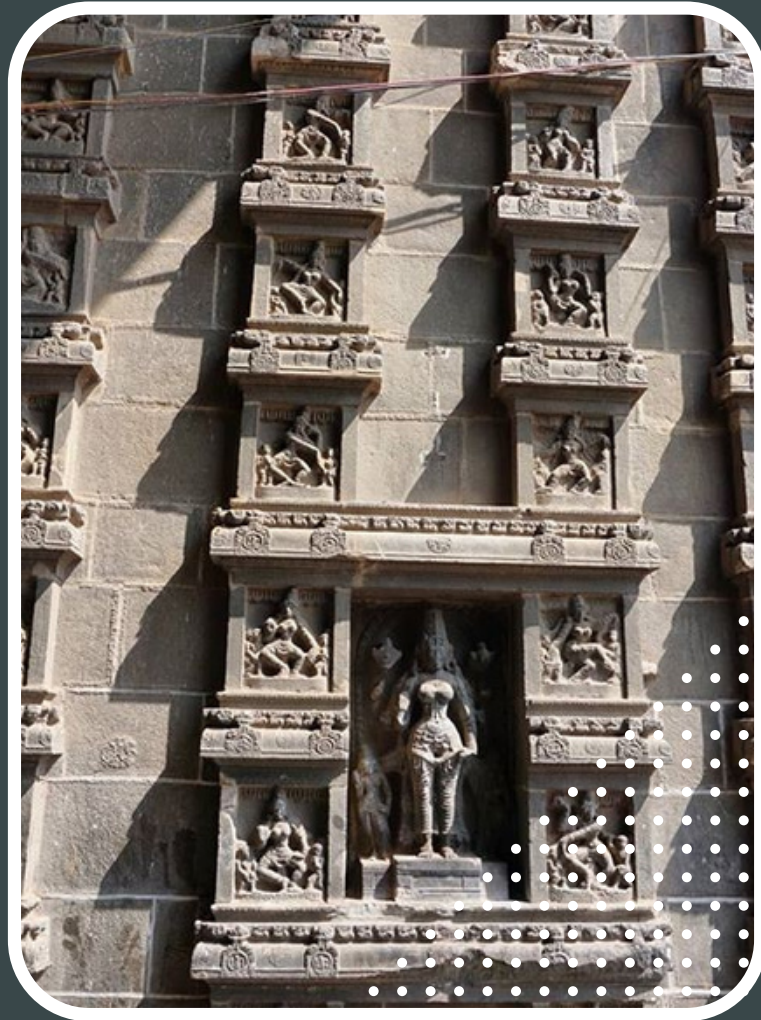
# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

The Chidambaram Temple is unique since the presiding deity worshipped is a metal icon of Lord Nataraja in contrast to statues of deities made of stone found in other temples.

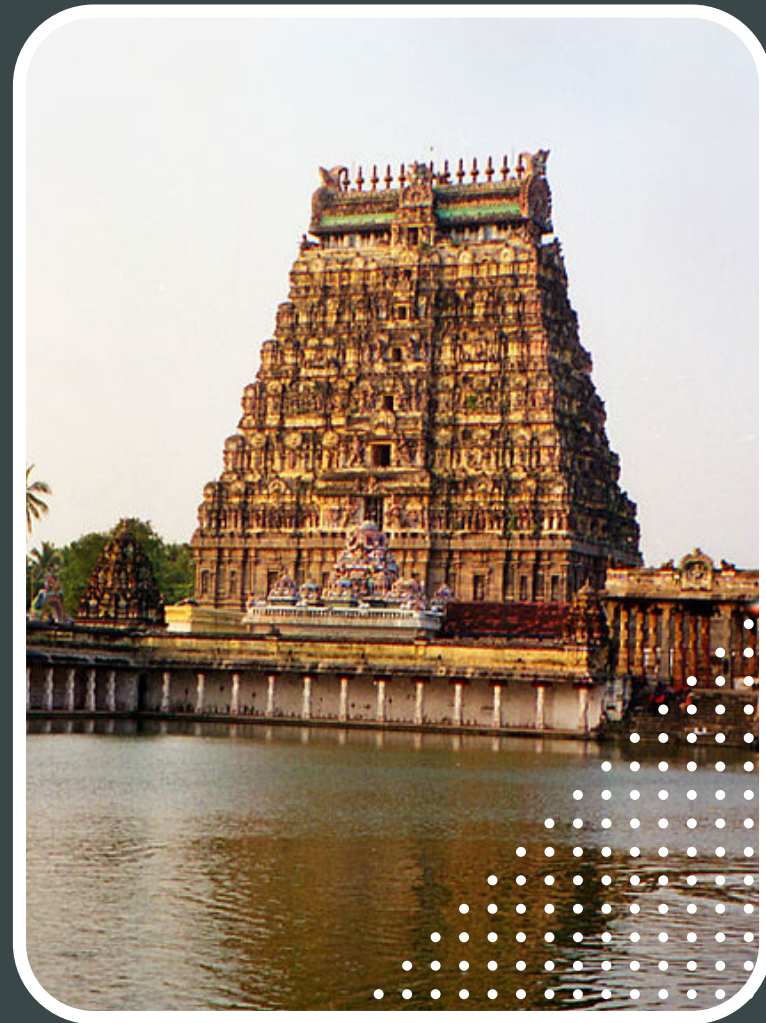
# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

The Dancing Lord Nataraja while dancing enacts the five activities known as Panchakritya – Srishti (creation), Sthiti (preservation, continued maintenance), Samhara (destruction, involution), Tirobhava (veiling, incarnation), and Anugraha (release, salvation).

# Chidambaram Temple

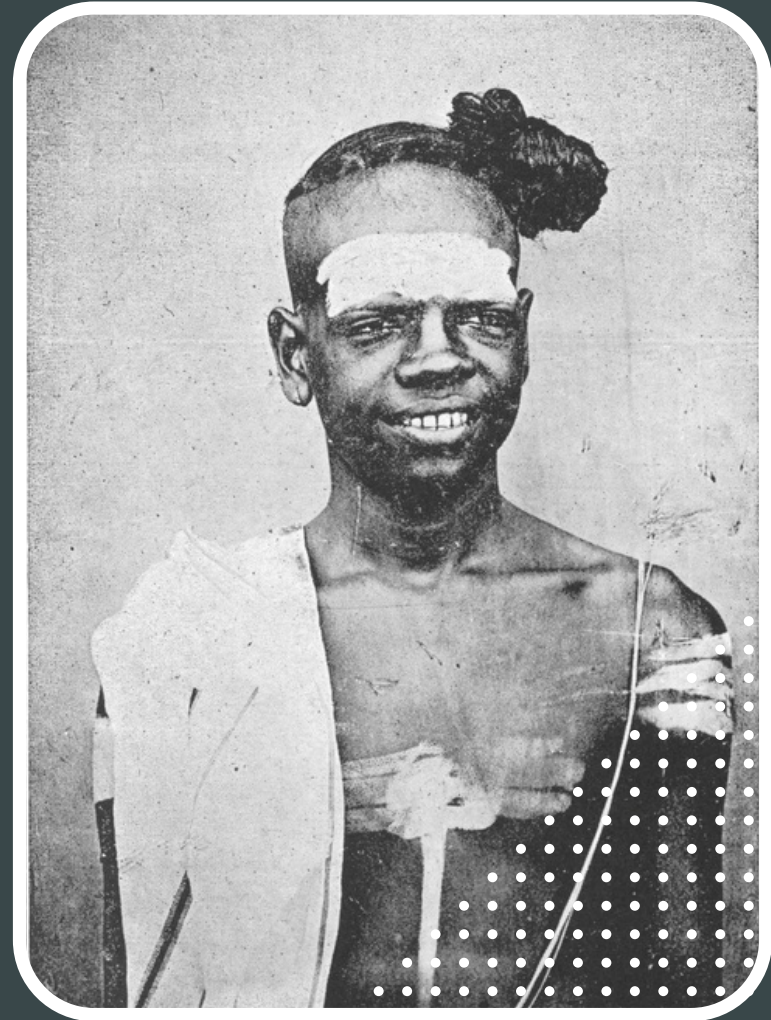


## HISTORY

**Chidambaram temple is owned by the denomination of Podu Dikshitaras**

**“An interesting feature about Chidambaram Temple is the system of management. It has no landed or other endowments nor any dastik allowance and is the property of a class of Brahmins peculiar to this town...” – Mr. W. Francis**

# Chidambaram Temple



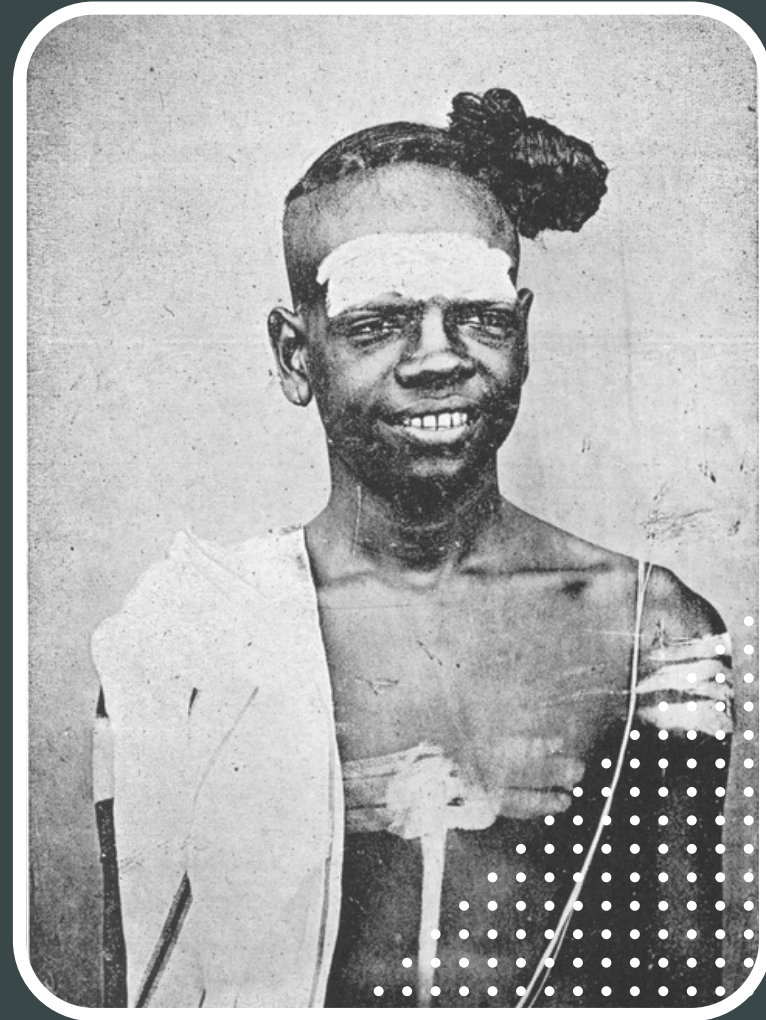
## HISTORY

**“The formal Committee of Dikshitaras is called “Podu Dikshitaras”. This Committee meets at the “Perambalam” hall of the temple. This Committee is the traditional administrator & protector of this temple. Only Dikshitaras have the right to perform worship in this great temple of Chidambaram.**

[↓ READ MORE BELOW](#)

# Chidambaram Temple

Om Nama Shivaya



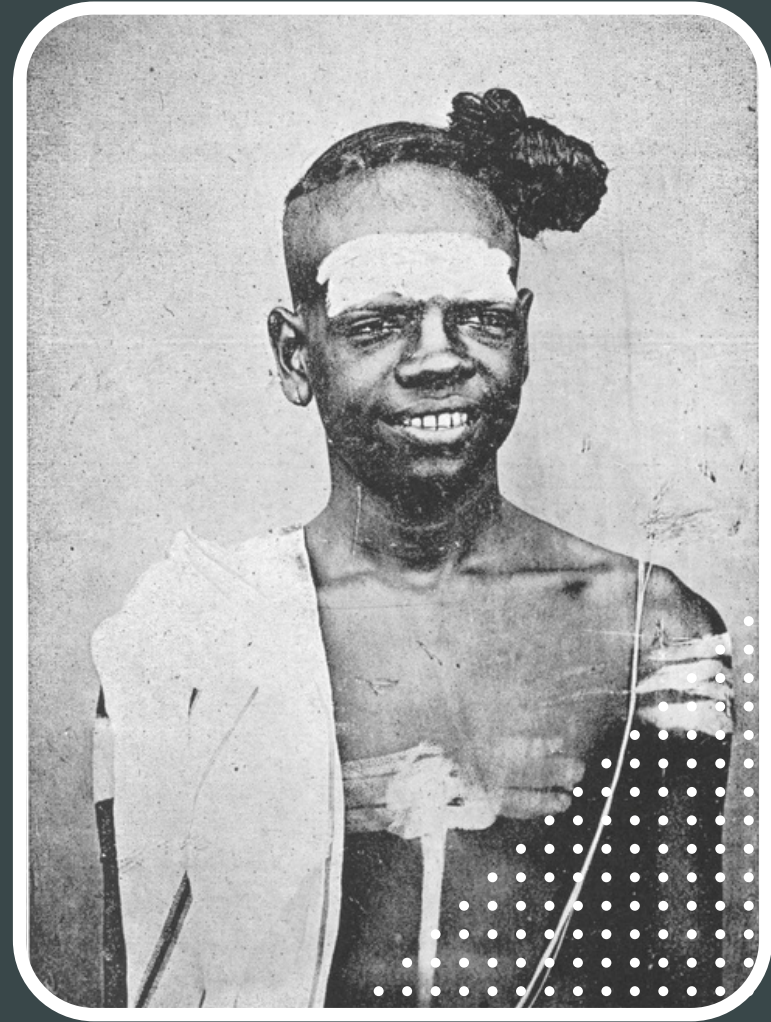
## HISTORY

### Temple administration

The Podu Dikshitaras of the Chidambaram temple are both Archakas & Trustees of the temple from time immemorial. The Dikshitaras would be on duty at the temple 20 at a time and each batch of 20 stays for 20 days.

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# Chidambaram Temple



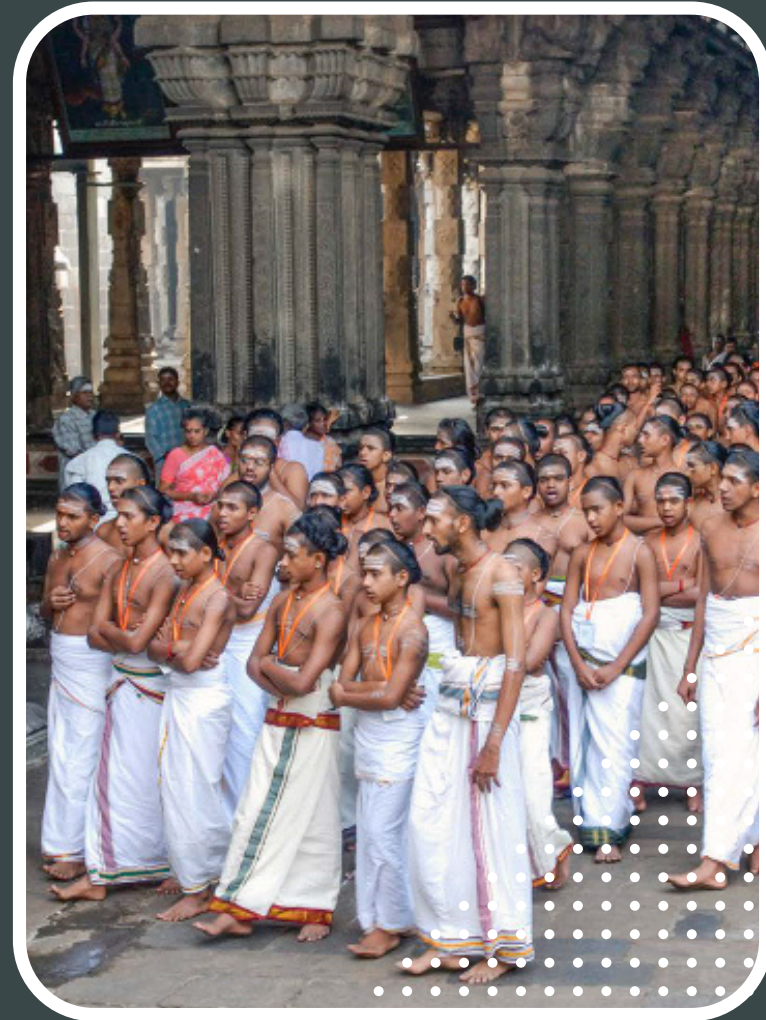
## HISTORY

till each has in his turn performed the complete tour of puja at the different shrines of the temple where the daily pujas are held. The **9 Management Committee members of Podu Dikshitars** are elected by lots on 31st March of each year.

[↓ READ MORE BELOW](#)

# Chidambaram Temple

Om Nama Shivaya



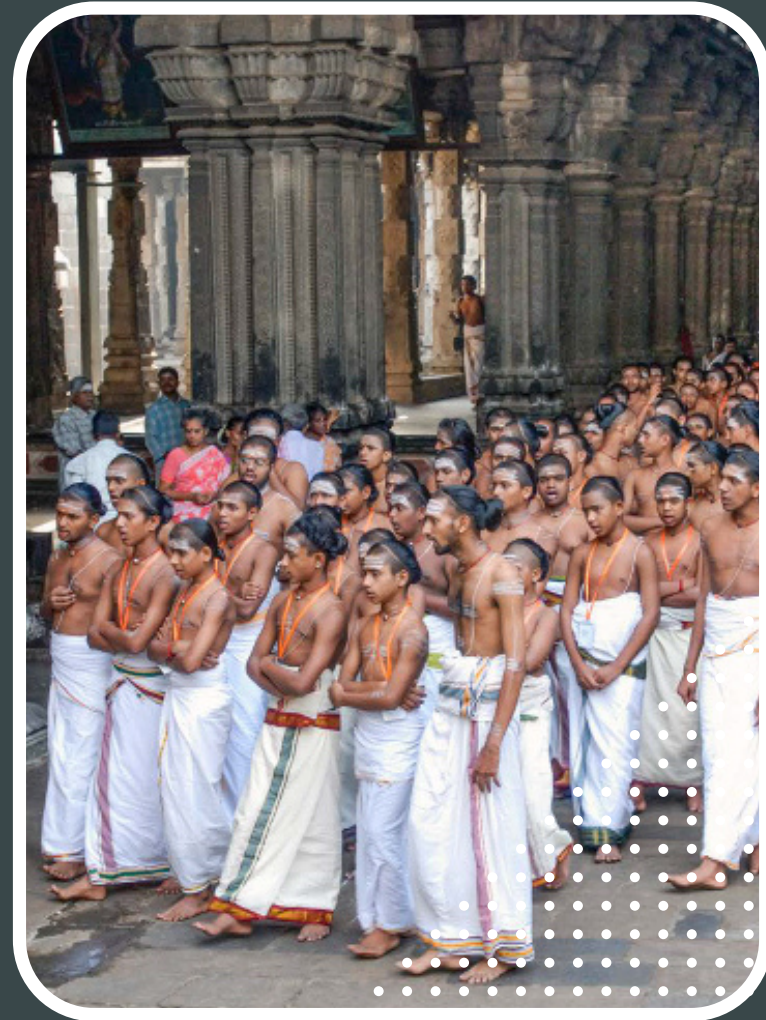
## HISTORY

### Who are the Podu Dikshitaras?

The Podu Dikshitaras are also known as **Tillai Vaazh Antanar** or 'the Brahmins of **Tillai**' were associated with the temple from its inception. This unique clan was originally three thousand in number & hence they were also known as "The Three Thousand Brahmins of **Tillai**"

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# Chidambaram Temple

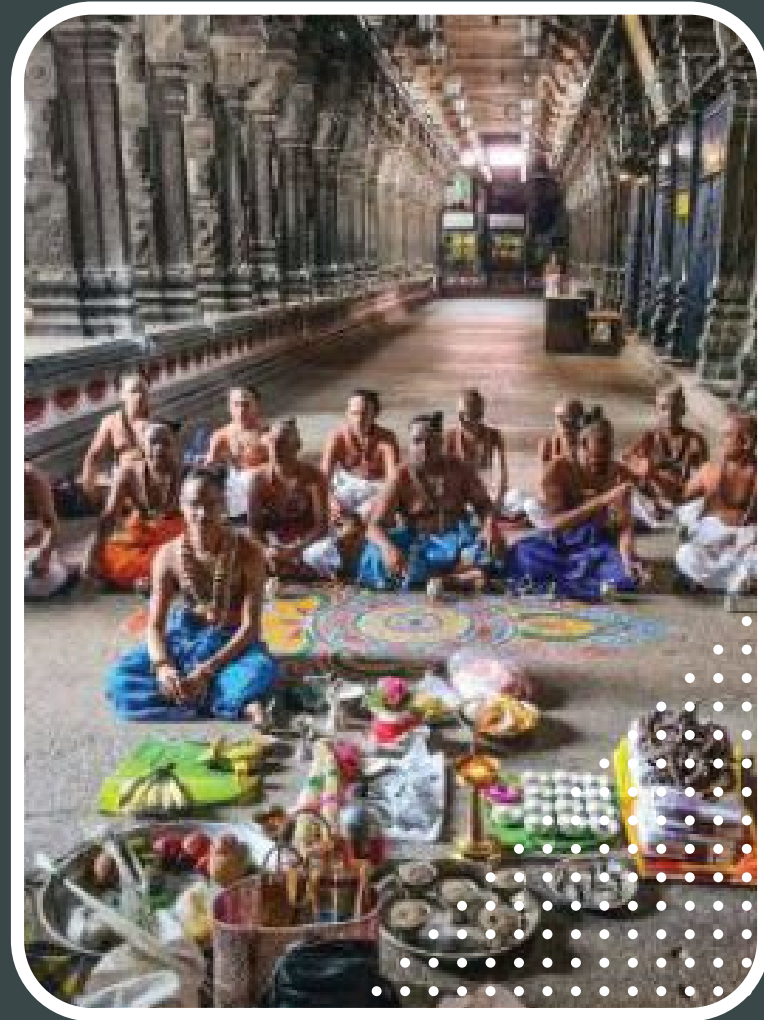


## HISTORY

### Uniqueness of Chidambaram Podu Dikshitaras

**Chidambaram Dikshitaras differ from other Brahmins in many respects. They are found only in Chidambaram town & form an endogamous clan. Their life, religion, education, training, culture & vocation revolve around the Chidambaram Nataraja Temple.**

# Chidambaram Temple

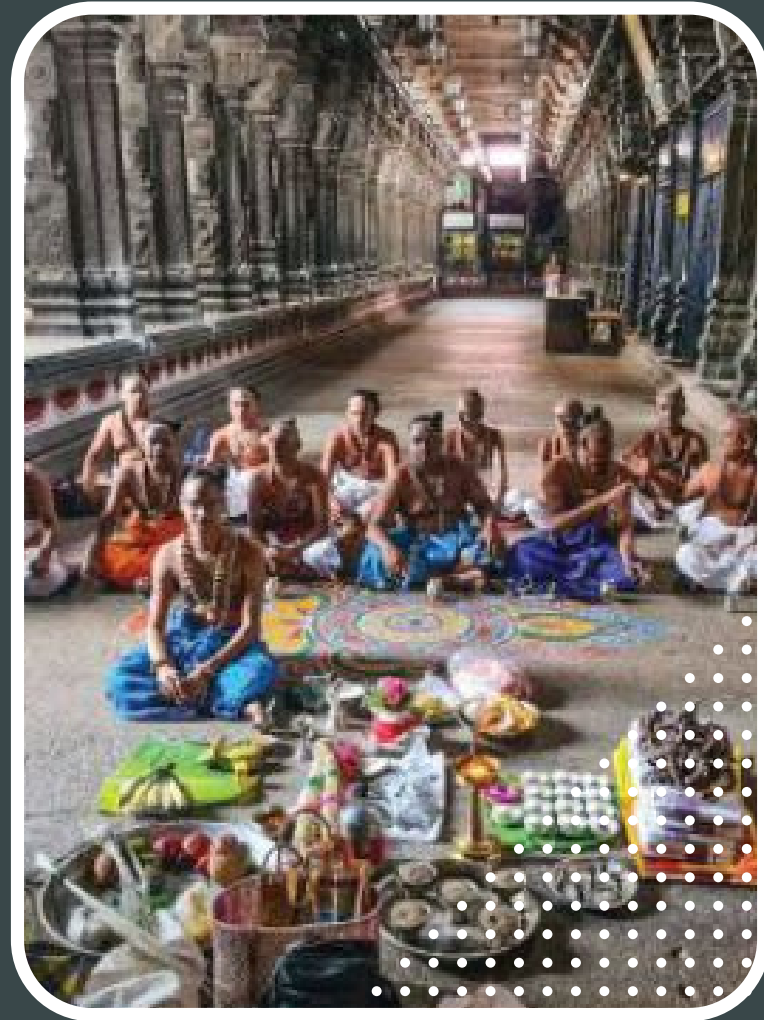


## HISTORY

### Pooja rituals

The Pooja rituals and tenets found in the Chidambaram Temple are very special & are found nowhere else in the Hindu world. Chidambaram temple poojas are based on Vedic rituals in contrast to agamic rituals found in most other temples.

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

The “**Rahasya Pooja**” done in the evening is not open for public darshan as are the other poojas. Only the Chief Priest of the Day and his assistant who is also a Dikshitar would be present to conduct and witness that pooja.

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

### Dikshitaras and Tamil

**Tamil is the mother tongue of Podu Dikshitaras. It is the language spoken in their homes and used by them in their administrative records in the temple and in their communications.**

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

**Saint Umapati Sivam**, a Tillai Vaazh Antanar of extraordinary merit has authored many Saiva Sastra works in Tamil and has sung the **History of Chidambaram (Temple) in Sanskrit as original** and has rendered it in Tamil, naming the Tamil work "**Kovil Puranam**".

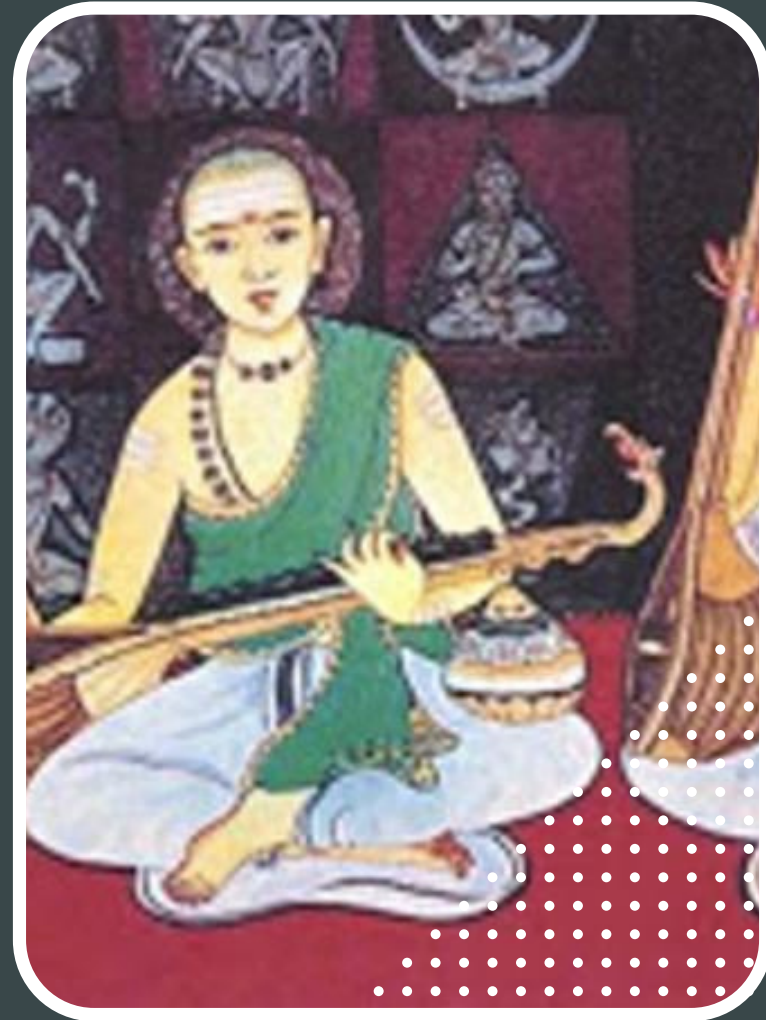
# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

Many Dikshitaras have erudition in the Tamil Canonical works **known as Tirumurai**. Many publications and research works have been authored by **Podu Dikshitaras on Tamil Tirumurais**.

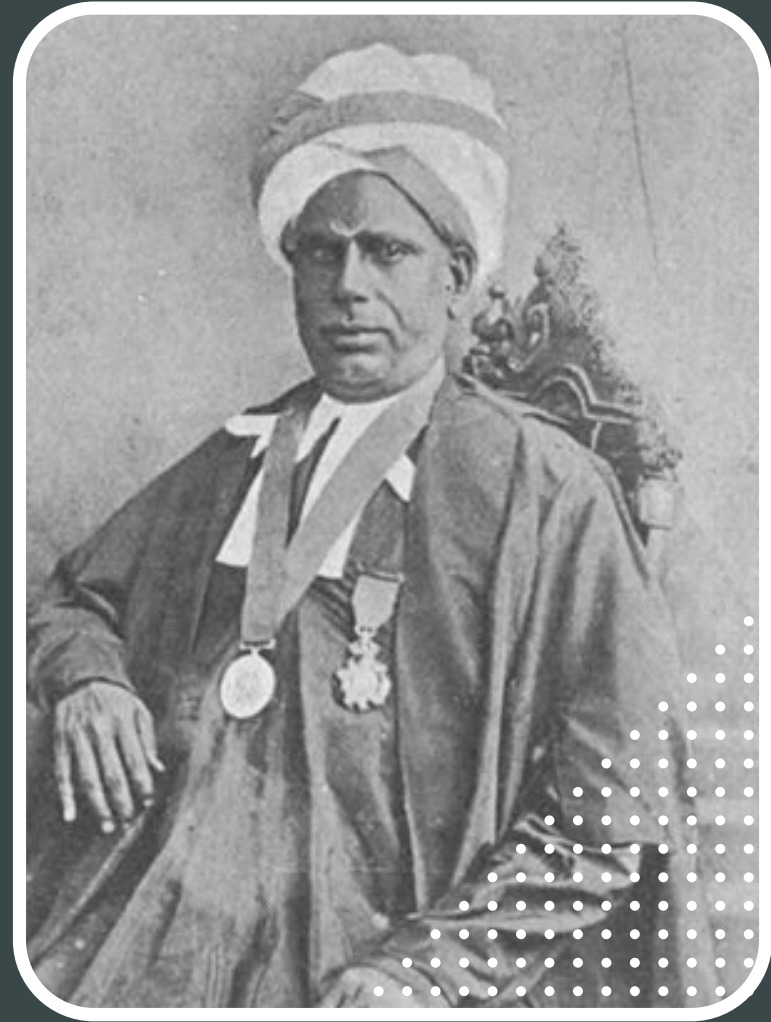
# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

In Chidambaram, the collection of the first Seven Tirumurais were found and preserved. In Chidambaram the eighth Tirumurai – Tiruvachakam and Tiru Kovaiyar were written. **The ninth Tirumurai consists of songs which are mostly in praise of Chidambaram Temple, Nataraja and Podu Dikshitar.**

# Chidambaram Temple



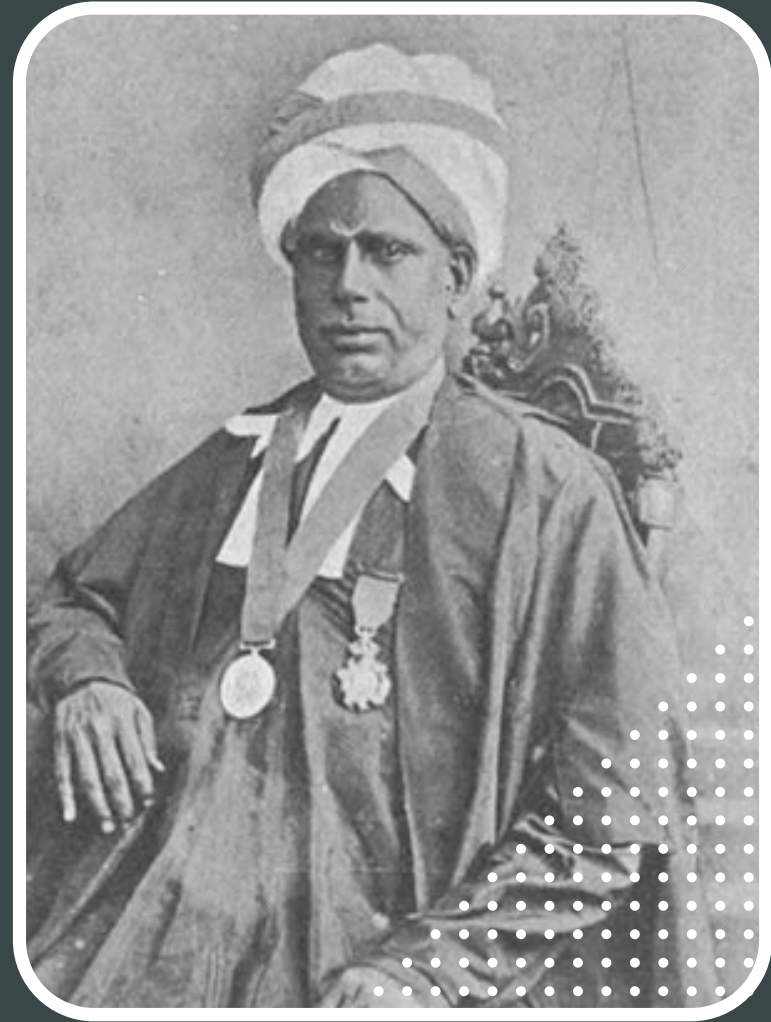
## HISTORY

### Temple administration & Denomination of Podu Dikshitars

**“About 250 families of Dikshadars reside at Chitambaram, & the nett income of the temple, which is derived from general offerings, is their recognized means of livelihood.**

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# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

Both religious & administrative duties and rights of the Podu Dikshitar are inseparably intertwined. The Division Bench upheld this inseparable nature of both the offices in ILR 14 MAD 103. Their Lordships held the pooja rights were, according to the usage of the institution,

↓ READ MORE BELOW

# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

appurtenant to their status as dharmakartas & the interests of the temple would be but inadequately protected if the two rights were severed. Chidambaram Temple is carried according to the constitution of the temple framed by Dikshitar centuries ago and printed for the first time in 1849.

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# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

This temple law is known as “**Shri Sabhanayagar Koil Sattam**”. The Hon’ble Division **Bench of the Madras High Court**. Podu Dikshitar strictly follow the temple traditions & ensure that the temple rituals and practices are conducted without any deviation from the traditions. **Poojas & rituals are conducted on time every day**

# Chidambaram Temple

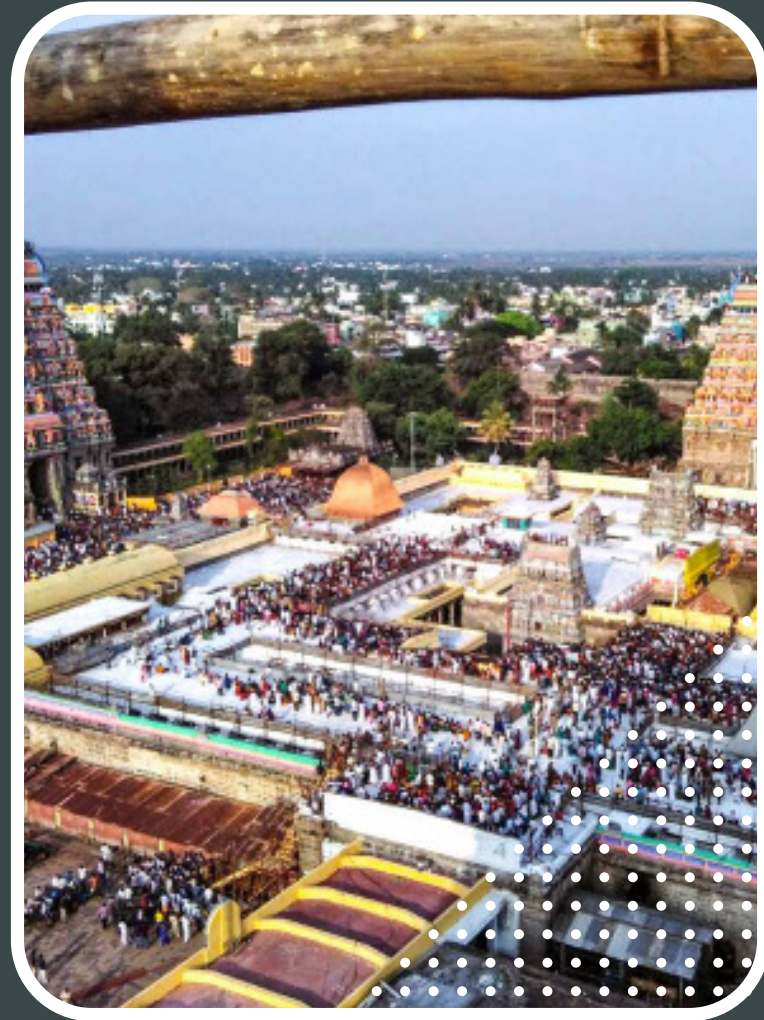


## HISTORY

The unflinching **loyalty of the Podu Dikshitaras to Nataraja and to their temple**, their strict adherence to rituals and their excellent administration have been recorded by scholars, institutions, Central & State Ministers, Hon'ble Judges of the High Courts & the Supreme Court, Government officials & Devotees.

# Chidambaram Temple

Om  
Nama Shivaya



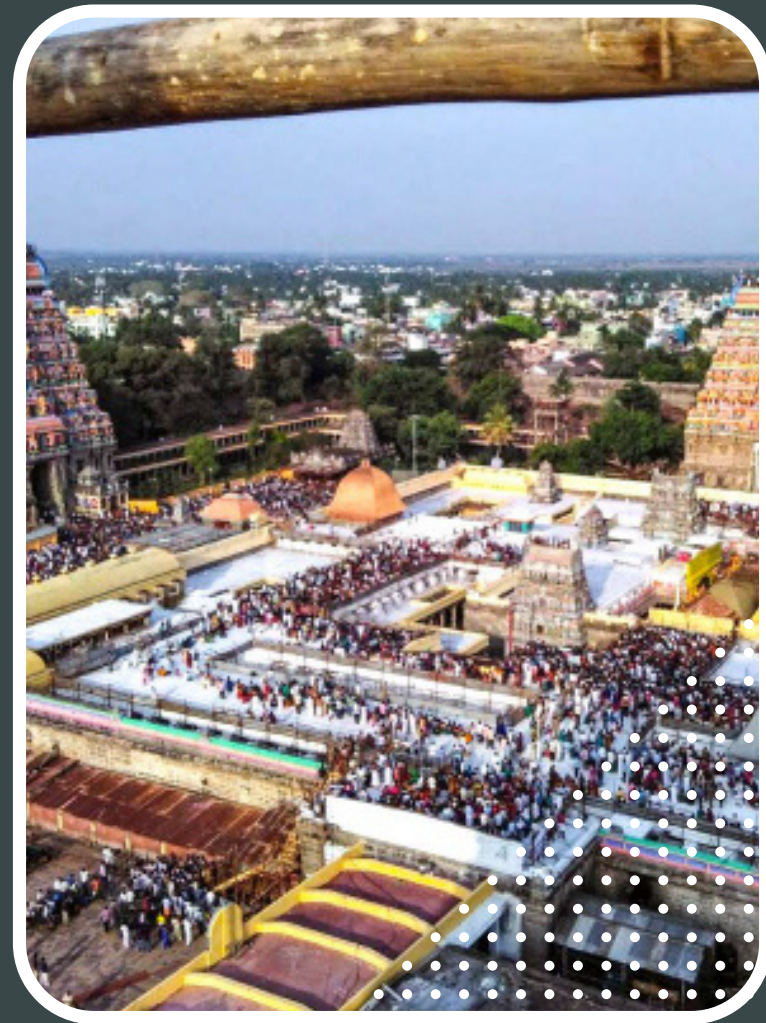
## HISTORY

### Protectors of the Chidambaram temple

The Podu Dikshitaras have gone through many ordeals & tribulations in protecting the essential properties of the temple & the deities at various times.

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# Chidambaram Temple

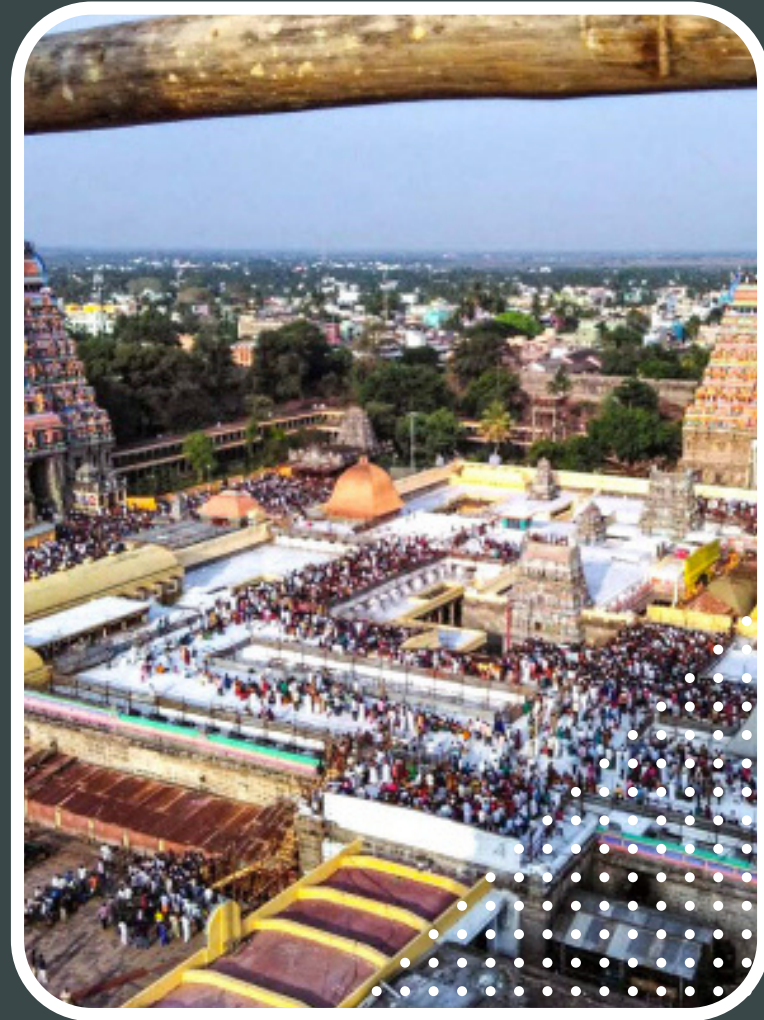


## HISTORY

### Religious denomination of Podu Dikshitaras

In 1951, when the HR & CE Department and Government tried to takeover the Chidambaram temple from the Podu Dikshitaras, the latter opposed the move on both merits and constitutional grounds. The Government opposed the Dikshitaras' claim of protection under Article 26.

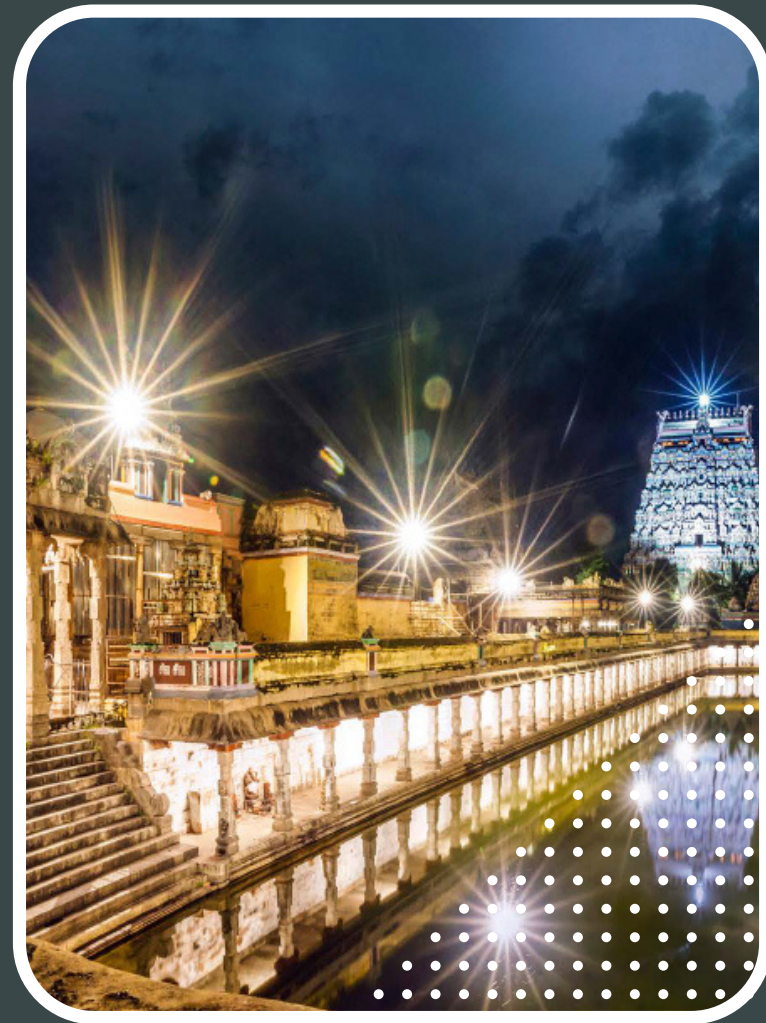
# Chidambaram Temple



## HISTORY

The Government appealed to the Supreme Court challenging these and other findings, but a Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal. Thus the denominational nature of the Podu Dikshitars and the Chidambaram temple were decided in favour of the Podu Dikshitars and the matter attained finality.

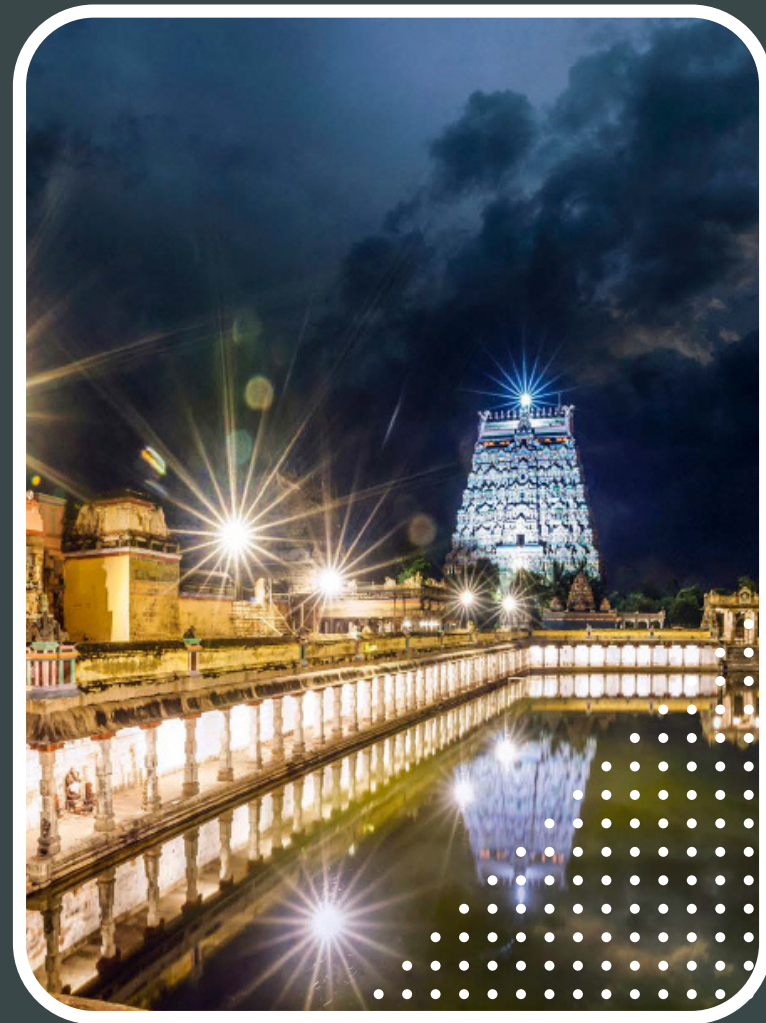
# Chidambaram Temple



## CONCLUSION

It is to protect such unique micro communities and minor denominations from the onslaught of the mighty and those in power that the framers of the Indian Constitution mooted special rights and protection under Article 26.

# Chidambaram Temple



## CONCLUSION

Due to various invasions and autocratic actions of kings and rulers at various periods and due to poverty, **the 3000 Chidambaram Brahmins have today dwindled to 360!** But as a community and as a religious and cultural identity they have so far survived.

# Chidambaram Temple

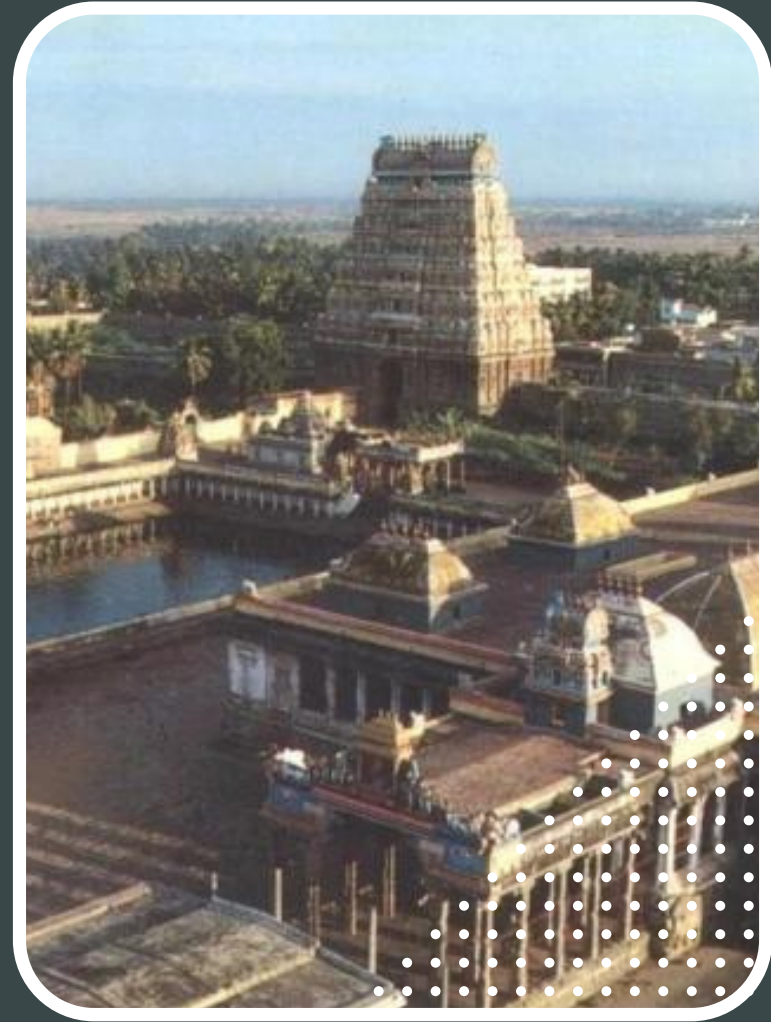


## CONCLUSION

**Podu Dikshitar**s were also among the first to **open the temple to all castes of Hindus**. This is probably the **only ancient temple in Tamil Nadu which permits non-Hindu devotees** to have darshan of the deities including the presiding deity Nataraja.

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# Chidambaram Temple



## CONCLUSION

It is **ironical** that the **Podu Dikshitar**s who survived tremendous tribulations and ordeals under tyrannical and totalitarian kings and regimes **now face the threat of annihilation** from the mala fide actions of a **democratically elected and ostensibly secular government**.