

Now that the month of *Thai* has dawned

After a period of particularly dark, gloomy and rainy weather in November and December the earth begins to smile in January, making one break into poetic rapture.

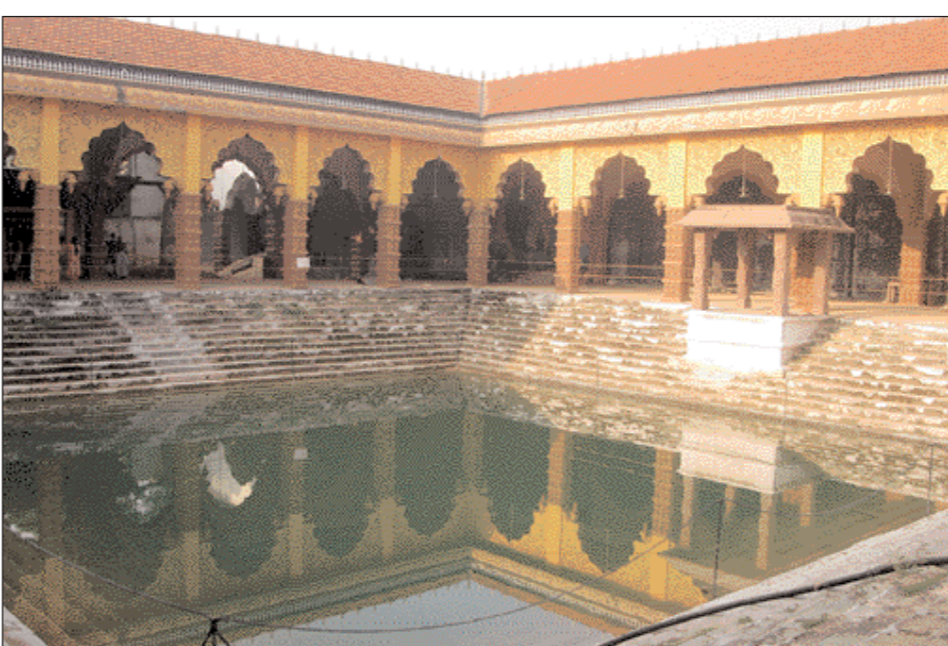
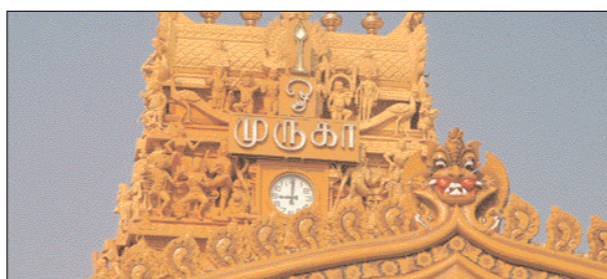
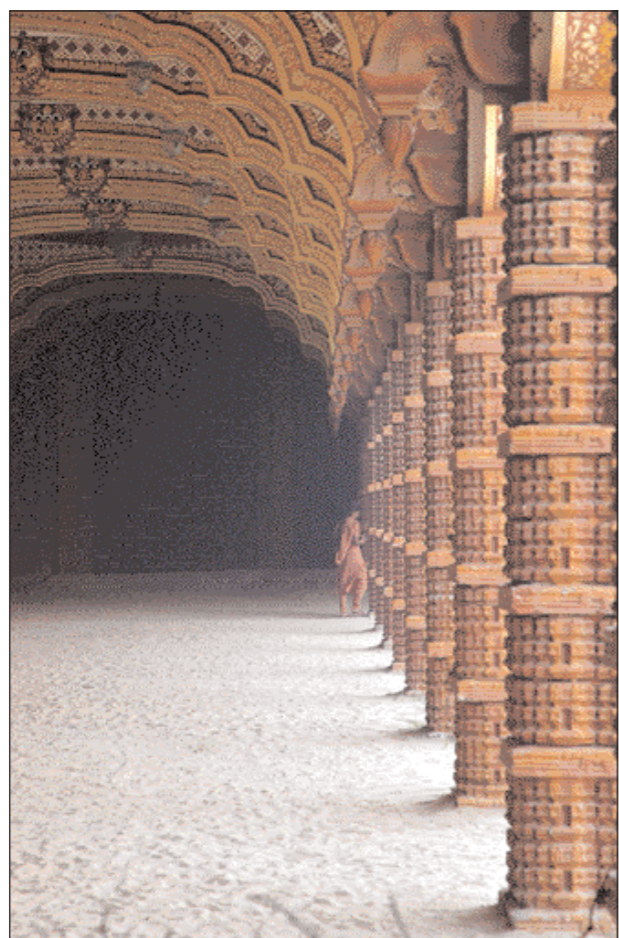
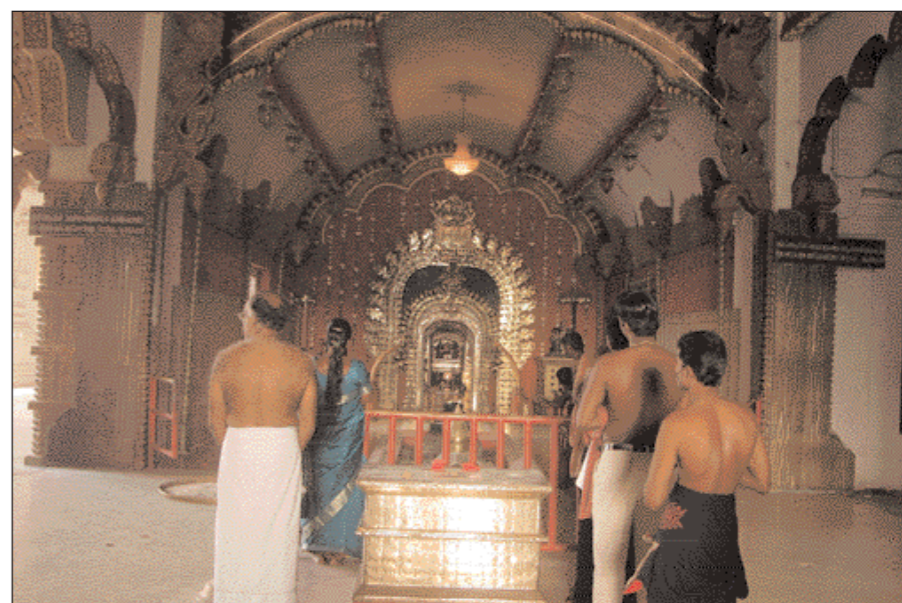
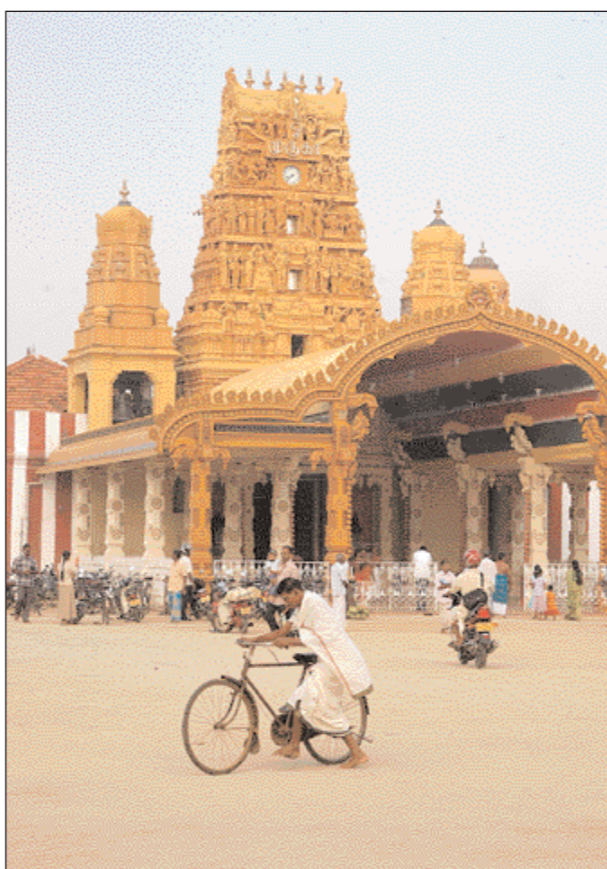
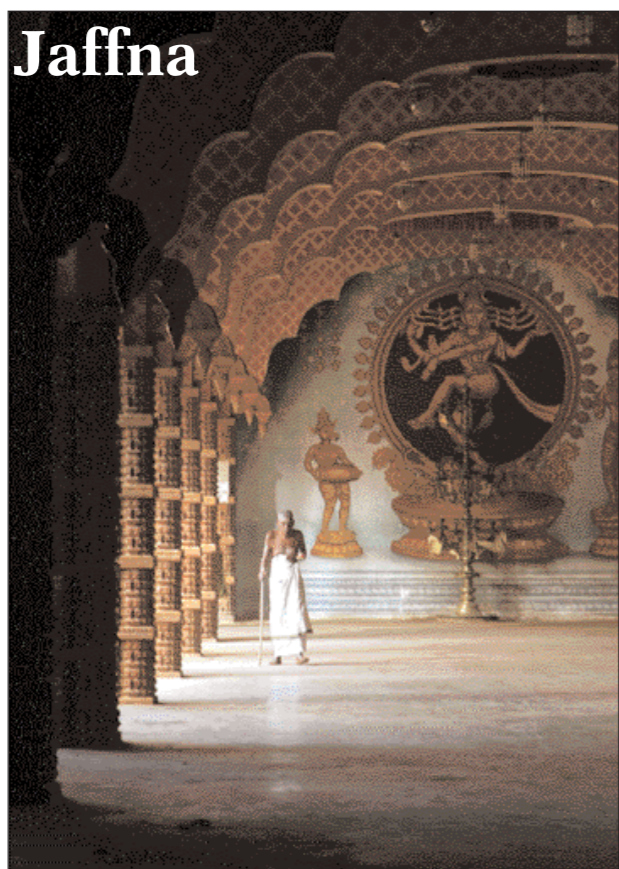
"Thai magalin pudukkolam pankajam pol malarkaiyile adhavanani namaskariththu kaikoopi pongiduwanam" (When the month of Thai dawns and blooms we raise our hands in worship to the Sun and prepare the pongal).

We capture here the special moments of the holy day of Thai Pongal or *Thaith Thirunaal* or *Thaith Thingal*, as it is variously called, marking the beginning of the harvest season as it dawned in the North and the North East this month. Pongal or sweetened milk rice was cooked on this day with the newly harvested grain in a new clay pot placed on the newly prepared hearth in many homes in Jaffna and Trincomalee. To quote Sivandini Duraiswamy from *Remembering Hindu Traditions* "Man lives in the hope of achieving something more and Pongal not only connotes this but also conveys to humanity the message of peace, unity and brotherhood, for a better tomorrow".

Who can deny the saying *"Thai piranthaal vali pirakkum"* (when the month of Thai dawns, times will be propitious)

-Aditha

Jaffna



Nallur Kandaswamy kovil, Jaffna

Pix: Thilak Perera

Trincomalee



Koneswaran kovil

Pix: Kavindra Perera