

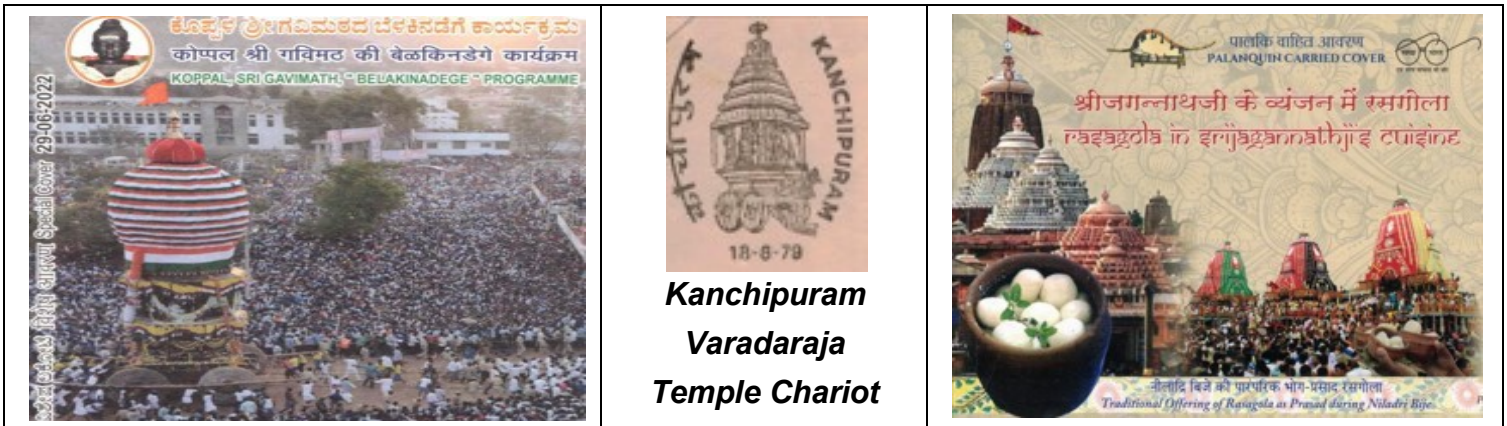
# Chariot (Temple Car) Festivals of Southern India

B.Shruthikaa, Tamil Nadu, India

Temple cars or Temple chariots are used to carry representations of Hindu gods around the streets of the temple on festival days. These chariots are generally manually pulled by the devotees of the deity.

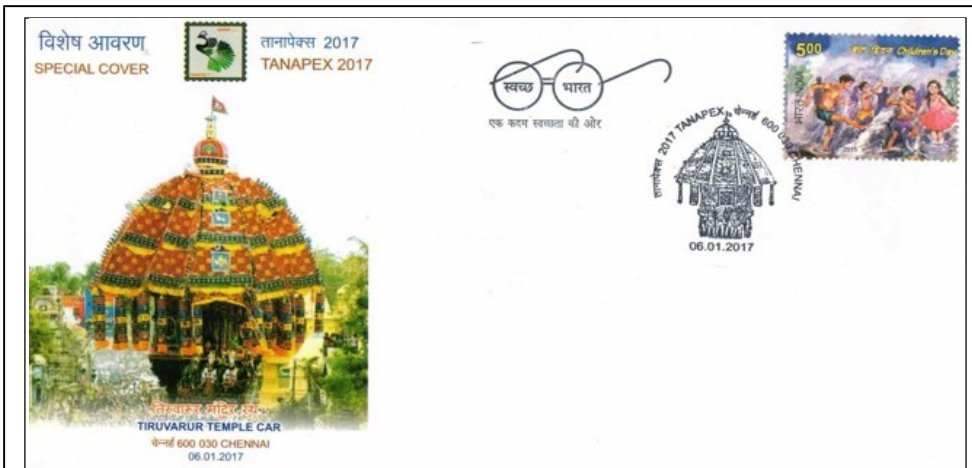
As of 2004, Tamil Nadu had 515 wooden carts. Besides Tiruvarur Temple, Tiruvannamalai and Chidambaram Temples are having huge wooden chariots for regular processions.

The size of the largest temple cars inspired the Anglo-Indian term Juggernaut (from Jagannath), signifying a tremendous, virtually unstoppable force or phenomenon. The Rath yatra of Puri Jagannath Temple is considered the oldest and largest Hindu chariot festival celebrated annually.



**Koppal Gavimath Chariot**

**RathaYatra, Puri Jagannath**



**Tiruvarur Azhither, the largest Chariot**



**Tiruchengode Temple Chariot**

**Kanchipuram** Varadharaja temple car is believed to have been donated by Krishnadevaraya in 1517 CE. In **Tiruchengode** Arthanareeshwara Temple Four Chariots are taken around the streets during the grand Vaikasi Vishaka festival every year.

**Largest temple chariot:** Asia's largest temple car procession in April to May every year at the **Tiruvarur** Tyagarajar temple in Tamil Nadu is a prominent feature of the ancient festival held in the town. It would be interesting to see that the 96-foot-tall temple car weighing 350 tons, tours the four streets around the temple, as devotees used huge ropes to pull the chariot.