

Evoor Sri Krishna Swamy temple

By

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Evoor is a sacred Hindu religious place in the Onattukara area next to Kayamkulam municipality in district Alappuzha of the Indian state of Kerala . Evoor is 40 Kilometers south of Alappuzha in the Onattukara area and next to Cheppad railway station. It is famous for the ancient Sri Krishnaswamy temple which originated in the presence of Bhagavan Sri Krishna Himself..

Evoor Sri Krishnaswamy Temple, (Onattukara's Guruvayoor)

Evoor Major Srikrishnaswamy temple is one of the most important 26 Mahavishnu shrines. It is linked to 'Khandava-dahanam' (burning of Khandava forest), described in Mahabharata . The remains of burnt trees being widely found here, confirm this. Further evidence are, nearby 'Mannarasala ' and 'Pandavarkavu' temples in this part of Onattukara .

The great Kanva Maharishi (one of the Saptarshis) , had been living in this area. 'Kannamangalam' (Kanva-mangalam) is nearby. His ' Ashrama ' (hermitage) later became a temple. Evoor Krishnaswamy's yearly 'Araattu' (ceremonial bath) is held in this temple's tank.



Origin of Evoor Temple

Agni-deva (Fire God) had been suffering from a severe stomach ailment. As a remedy, Lord Brahma advised him to consume the herb-rich Khandava forest. Unfortunately, Takshaka the Serpent-king and a close friend of Lord Indra , was residing there. Whenever Agni tried to consume the forest, Lord Indra's thundershowers dutifully extinguished the fire.

Once, Sri Krishna and Arjuna were visiting this place . Appearing in the form of a Brahmana Agni-dev sought their help and they agreed .

Then Kanva Maharshi arrived there to save his 'Arca Murty' (a four armed image of Mahavishnu). Bhagavan Krishna granted a boon that the 'Murty ' will not be harmed by fire.

Soon, Agni started consuming Khandava forest. Lord [Indra] used thundershowers promptly . But listening to Sri Krishna's advice, Arjuna constructed a "Sharakoodam" (shelter of arrows) to complete 'Khandava dahanam'.

Thus Agni's ailment was cured. An immensely grateful Agni-deva sought Bhagavan Krishna's permission to install that "Murthy" in a new temple there to facilitate permanent worship.

As instructed by Sri Krishna, Arjuna fired an arrow to determine the location . A new temple was soon consecrated where the arrow had landed. (Evoor is the shortened form of 'Eytha ooru', meaning the place from where the arrows were showered to make the 'sharakoodam').

Bhagavan Krishna Himself infused His divine power into the 'Murty'. And Arjuna performed the first pooja after the *Prana-Prathishta*.

A 'Murty ' of 'Bhoothanathaswamy' ('Kiratha Murthy' form of Lord Siva) together with 'Yakshi Amma' (Devi Parvathy) were consecrated as the Sub -Deities. The ancient trees roofing them are the survivors of Khandava-forest .

Fire and Re-construction

About 125 years back, this temple was destroyed in a fire . When the 'Sreekovil' (Sanctum sanctorum) was caught fire, so many people tried to remove the Deity, but failed . At last, an old Brahmana-devotee of the adjacent house , after taking a dip in the temple tank, entered the raging flames and brought out the Deity, safely.

Sri Moolam Thirunal then king of Travancore , was in "Kasi" at that time. Appearing as a Brahmana-boy in his dream, Sri Krishna asked the king to re-construct the Evoor temple. Immediately , the king returned home and constructed a huge temple complex. It contained royal facilities such as security trenches atop the roof all around and underground drainage network to discharge the 'abhisheka water' from 'Sreekovil' to adjacent temple tank.

The renowned 'Tharananalloor Tantri' (whose ancestor had been brought to Kerala by Sri Parashurama was appointed as the traditional 'Tantri ' . Immense wealth (including lands and other assets) was arranged to ensure self reliance. Also, extensive neighborhood facilities and all necessary infrastructure were put in place for the temple.

"Prayoga Chakra Prathishta"

Evoor Bhagavan's Deity is the unique "Prayoga Chakra Prathishta" :

'Panchjanya Sankha' in rear Live 'left hand ; Sudarshana Chakra ' in rear right hand ; Butter in the frontal'Frontal left hand is held on the hip as 'mani-bandham' ; right hand.

Bhagavan is in a combative mood ready to release ' Sudarshana Chakra '. He is the 72 year old Sri Krishna at His peak glory and power.

Vedic experts have confirmed the extremely rare presence of Srichakra on this Deity. Consequently, "Raktha-pushpanjali" is a special offering here which is unavailable in Vishnu temples elsewhere.

Evoor temple is popularly known as the “Guruvayoor of Onattukara”.

“UTSAVAM” (Annual Festival)

The intensity of the “living aura” (Jeeva Chaithanyam) in and around the Deity is of prime importance in a vedic temple. It is natural for the “aura” to overflow or radiate when the Deity is consecrated by great Yogis and Rishis. At Evoor, Bhagavan Sri Krishna Himself breathed life into the Deity. So, the “living aura” here overflows and floods all around the entire surroundings. Also, Tantri's meditation, chanting of Vedas, ‘Pushpaanjali’ and ‘Abhishekam’ with vedam, the Poojari's discipline; and earnest performance of rites and rituals, special festivals like “Utsavam” (annual festival), and distribution of food, have further enhanced the power of the Deity.

“Utsavam” is for the restoration of divine “Chaithanyam” of Deity, by performing necessary purification and energization rituals. Culturally, it consists of various processions, illumination, fireworks, art-forms, etc.

Evoor “Utsavam” lasts for ten days. Beginning the first day of ‘Makaram’ (January) . It ends after the “Aaraattu” (Holy Bath). All ten days, the place wears a festive look, streets dressed up with arches, festoons, etc. Every building is tastefully decorated with lights, plantain trunks, bunches of coconut and arecanuts. The Gopuram and courtyards are decorated with illuminations. Many lamps, “deepasthambams” and “vilakku” are all lighted.

The "Utsavam" rituals include "Prasaada Sudhhi" (purification of Murthy), "Rakshoghna Vaasthu Homam", "Prasaada Raksha", "Chathassudhhi", "Dhaara", "Navakam", "Panchakam", "Panchagavya Kalasam", etc. (theses are "Abhishekams"), "Kotiyettu" (Flag hoisting), "Pallivetta" (Holy Hunting), "Aaraattu" (Holy bath), "Kotiyirakku", "Pallikkuruppu" etc., and in between "Sreebhootha Bali" and "Utsava Bali".

“Kotiyettam” (Flag Hoisting)

The Tantri first invokes the Deity by tantric rituals such as ‘Kalasam’ and other poojas; and then infuses ‘aura’ on to the Flag bearing ‘Garuda’ emblem. After further poojas, the consecrated Flag is hoisted on the golden Flagstaff. Amid loud cries of “Narayana, Narayana”, the divine Flag plays around a little and then flies up resembling a bird taking off to the sky. A supplementary Flag is hoisted atop the wooden Flagstaff, manually erected in front of “Bhutanathaswamy” (Upa-deva). A large crowd of Devotees happily witnesses, the auspicious completion of “Kotiyettam”.

“Utsavam” (Days 1 to 8)

The events of first five days are sponsored jointly by Travancore Devaswom board and specific groups of devotees. Three ‘Karas’ (villages) namely Evoor South, Evoor North and Evoor North-West conduct the events of days 7, 8 and 9 respectively. Each ‘Kara’ competes with others to make own “Utsavam” the best.

After the poojas, tantric rituals and day-time cultural programs such as “Ottanthullal” etc, thousands of oil lamps are lit all around temple in the evening. Upon completion of “Deeparadhana”, two hour long ‘Seva’ starts at 7.15 PM. The Poojari carries atop the

male elephant , Bhagavan's "Thidambu" (direct manifestation of the Deity). Renowned musicians play "Nadaswaram" (a wind instrument) supported by percussion instruments, to sing devotional songs in praise of Bhagavan . It is a beautiful devotional feast for the eye, ear and heart. And is followed by popular cultural programs like 'Kathakali',velakali etc.

9th Day "Utsavam"

On this day, in addition to the regular items , "Kala-kali " (decorated effigies of Bulls) is a special event .

" Kala-kettu " is a thanksgiving offering to the lord by farmers. Small 'Kala-effigies' are hand carried whereas the big ones are mounted on wheels. The colourful "Kala-kali" completes 3 rounds around the temple , wildly swinging in the air amid thunderous cheers of "Arppoooo ... Irrooooo".

After "Deeparadhana" and "SEVA" , the "Paliivetta" is performed at midnight.

" Pallivetta " (Holy Hunting)

"Pallivetta" is the traditional yearly event , wherein Evoor Bhagavan proceeds to the distant banyan tree (300 m away at the entry point) to hunt down evil forces.

According to the tradition , "Jeevatha Ezunnallathus " of two nearby Bhagavathy temples (Kannamballil and Kalloorath) arrives together. They are Bhagavan's sisters. When they arrive in front of the 'Sreekovil ' (sanctum sanctorum), they are accorded a traditional welcome.

Evoor Bhagavan's "Thidambu " is mounted atop the gold caparisoned elephant. Accompanied by servants and devotees , He starts for the 'Pallivetta'. Upon reaching the spot beneath the banyan tree , a bow and arrows are used for 'Pallivetta'. When the victorious Bhagavan turns around to return , the "Jeevatha Ezunnallathus " of His jubilant Bhagavathy-sisters welcome Him.

The priestly Brahmana dancers, clad in the traditional style holding the heavy "Jeevatha "on shoulders , perform the divine dance. The dance begins with "Kotti Urayikkal" (drumming to make the dancers possessed). The drumming in different rhythms accompanied by scintillating music coaxes the performers to dance to each rhythm, creating a holy atmosphere. Each circumlocution is regulated by a different "Thaalam" (beat). This is very touching with thousands of devotees watching with tearful joy, Evoor Sri Krishna's both Bhagavathy-sisters play about ecstatically in front of Him who lovingly appreciates them by swaying atop His elephant.

The "Jeevathas " dance just in front of Bhagavan , then running back to dance at a distance , holding hands to dance in unison , etc. Each "Ezhunnallathukaaran" (Lead dancer) directs his group according to Bhagavathi's revelation to him.

(It is a wonder of wonders how such fragile Brahmanas could dance wildly like this bearing weight. No mortal human being can do this. One could see red lumps of flesh

building up on the dancers' shoulders ; but they don't show any signs of pain or fatigue at all. In reality, it is Bhagavathy who is dancing , in the form of Her Priests).

Upon reaching the temple , Evor Bhagavan stands on the eastern courtyard facing west. Both His Bhagavathy-sistes dance wildly raising the tempo to supreme ecstasy. Finally , after bidding farewell to brother Sri Krishna , they quickly complete 'pradakshina' around temple , bow down once again in front of the 'Sreekovil' and run outside.

Being sad at the separation , a silent Bhagavan returns to His Sreekovil.

" Aaraattu " (Holy Bath)

The 10 days long "Utsavam" culminates with a grand "Aaraattu" procession, with the "Utsava Deity " being carried to the " Aaraattu palace tank " at " Muttam " which is 3 Kilometers away. (This was where Kanva-Maharshi used to worship the Deity before it moved to Evor temple). "Aaraattu" refers to the sacramental ablution of the Deity in the sacred tank.

In the morning , Devotees take a dip in the temple tank and perform the traditional 'urulal' ("sayana-pradakshinam " beneath the Flagstaff and entrances).

Some devotees take the traditional fasting to take part in the, "Aaraattu " to be held at midnight .

In the afternoon, the "Kettukazhcha" procession is held with participation from 3 " Karas " around the temple and from several communities. Decorated effigies of bulls, and epic figures complete 3 rounds around the temple. The marvelous as well as magical effect of the combination of numerous percussion and wind instruments is most thunderous, spectacular and dazzling. The enthusiasm and dedication all around reveal supreme Bhakthy to their Ishta-Devan, Evor Bhagavan.

After the "Kettukazhacha" procession , thousands of oil lamps are lit all around the temple. Devotees wait in anticipation for Bhagavan's arrival. The Tantri ritually transfers the "living aura" from principal Deity to the "Utsava Deity" to be boarded on the "Thidambu ".

Among ecstatic cheers " Arppooo.... Irroooo " from thousands of Bhakthas , Melsanti (lead Pujari) comes out carrying the "Thidambu ". The huge mail elephant bows low for the Melsanti and other three brahmanas to sit on his top. When the majestic elephant stands up , it is a sight for Gods to behold ! Bhagavan Sri Krishnaswamy in all His glory !!! Many "Theevettis" (oil lit multi-fires) being held aloft by men on the floor illuminate Him ; "Muthukkuta" (ornamental silk umbrella) covers Him ; "Alavattam" (couple of circular hand-fans made of peacock feathers) and "Venchamaram" (couple of white feather-sticks) fanning from His back !

Amid huge cheers from devotees, Bhagavan's elephant escorted by two other elephants (Poojaris carrying "Muthukkutas" atop them) , proceeds to the main gate and stands there facing thousands of devotees on the east .

Then comes the magnificent display of thunderous fireworks. It is indeed grand and extremely colourful .

Bhagavan's elephant starts moving gracefully for "Aaraattu" procession. Then comes the traditional "Kuchelavruthm-Vanchippattu" in front of Bhagavan. Fragile elders sing the "vanchippattu " melodiously and youngsters repeat loudly. Beautiful "Vanchippattu" and ecstatic dancing to its tune together with the music of percussion and wind instruments enliven the procession. Bhagavan's Deity atop the elephant gently sways in appreciation ; and this divine sight motivate the singers infinitely. Bhaktas welcome the "Aaraattu procession" at various points by dazzling fireworks and other offerings.

When the procession reaches the paddy field ahead of the "Aaraattu palace", Bhagavan is ceremoniously welcomed by the "twin-Bull" effigies and associated rituals belonging to His traditional labourers .

Upon reaching the "Aaraattu palace" , the "Thidambu " is seated at the designated place. Singers complete the last lines of "Kuchela-vrutham" and then seek Bhagavan's permission to leave , singing " Adiyangal vidakollan Bhagavan anuvadikkane!!" (Please permit us to leave , O Bhagavan !!).

After conducting the poojas by 1 AM, the Tantri and Melsanti bring the "Utsava Deity" to the tank platform and perform further poojas. Finally, carrying the Deity in their hands, they take three dips in the water and complete the ritualistic "Aaraattu". Afterwards, the "Utsava Deity" is seated at the palace for Darshan.

Immediately , all Bhakthas jump into the tank and after taking (3) dips , performed "Urulal" (Sayana-pradakshinam) around the palace to submit themselves entirely to Bhagavan .

"Kotiyirakkam" (Lowering of Flag)

After the "Aaraattu " , the procession returns to Evoor temple. The rituals of "Kotiyirakkam" start around 5.00 AM.

The Tantri performs tantric-rituals to restore "aura" from Flag to the "Utsava Deity". After this , he lowers the Flag to complete "Kotiyirakkam". Later, the "Utsava Deity" is shifted to the "Ardhamandap" inside temple for "Pallikkuruppu" (sleep).

"Pallikkuruppu" (Holy Sleep)

After returning from "Aaraattu" , Bhagavan sleeps nicely on the "Ardhamandap" in front of Sanctum Sanctorum. A small calf (young cow) is tied to the pillar and the main temple is closed. Bhagavan would wake up only after hearing the cry of the calf. Tantri, Poojaris, staff and devotees wait outside in anticipation.

When the calf cries , Tantri and Melsanti entered the temple to transfer Bhagavan's 'living aura' (chaithanyam) from the "Utsava Deity" to the principal " Deity". Then the temple door is opened , to allow 'darshan' to the devotees.

“Other Festivals Associated with Evoor Temple ”

Aiyalyam Makam, Shankaranthi Vallam Kali, Tiruonam Ulsavam, Ashtami Rohini, Kuchela dinam, etc .

How to reach Evoor

Evoor temple is situated near the Cheppad Railway station (Between Kayamkulam and Harippad . It is the coastal railway route. It is more easy to reach there by bus . Cheppad is about 7 km north of Kayamkulam Bus stand . From both Harippad and Mavelikara Bus stands Evoor is about 5 km south . You can get down at Cheppad Junction and go by an auto-rikshaw to Evoor temple . Alternatively , you can get down at the bus stop (south of Cheppad and north of Ramapuram Devi temple) on NH-47 and walk up to the temple which is about 1 km east of NH-47 .

Om Namo Bhagavathe Vasudevaya !!!