



## Kalpathi Temple / Kalapathy Temple, Kerala

From <http://www.religiousportal.com/KalpathyTemple.html> and <http://kbspalakkad.org/activities/activities.htm> )

The Kalpathy Vishwanatha Swamy shrine is the oldest Shiva temple situated 3 kms from Palakkad. The temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva. It is famous for the annual Chariot Festival. The festival is a gala event and lasts for seven days.

The Kalpathy Vishwanatha Swamy temple is the oldest Shiva temple in Malabar. It was built around 1425 A.D. by Kombi Achan; the then raja of Palakkad. Kalpathy Car Festival is based on Vedic Tamil Brahmin Culture.

On the last three days of the car festival, beautifully decorated temple chariots are ceremoniously drawn through the streets by thousands of devotees whose soul stirring chants rent the air. Three magnificent chariots, bedecked with flowers and flags, dominate the festival, each sanctified by the presence of the lord. Crowds of people and millions of hands try to reach out to be one of the privileged to have the honor of pulling the chariots, as they proceed in stately grandeur.

The weeklong annual Chariot Festival begins in the month of November, every year. Thousands of devotees haul the huge, intricately carved temple chariots through the streets. Vedic recitals are held in the temple throughout the festival. Vedic chants sonorously recited by the Vedic scholars escorting the god, makes Kalpathy come alive with the spirit of true devotion and joyous celebration. The Tamil Brahmin villages adjacent to the temple have been declared a World Heritage site. A visit to these villages offer a glimpse of the cultural life that existed 1000 years ago.

### Legend

Legend has it that a Brahmin widow named Lakshmiammal went to Banaras and brought Lingam and installed in the present site on the Southern bank of river Neela Bhagirathi. The location of the temple and steps leading to the river brings mind of a visitor the Banaras Temples on the bank of Ganges. Hence this temple is called "Kasiyil Pakuthi Kalpathy" (Half Banaras).

The primacy of Sree "Viswanatha Swamy" Temple in Palakkad Town is even today accepted, as the deities of all the temples of the town is taken in procession to the Viswanatha Swamy Temple on Mamankam day held once in 12 years. An inscription in Vattezutte on a stone planted to the east of this temple records some endowments witnessed by Itikombi Achan, a member of the Palakkad Royal family in Malayalam Era 600 (1424-25 AD). Evidently this temple was consecrated earlier and if we are to go by legends, it was built at the instance of one Lakshmy Ammal a widow of Sekaripuram who gave the Prince 1320 gold coins to build the temple and entrusted with him its management. This trustee system still continues in the temple.

Presently it is located at the meeting point of Old and New Kalpathy. There are about 150 houses on each side of the temple. Recently, these have been declared as “The Heritage” by the Archeological Survey of India , since such a large congregation of tiled line houses sharing walls belonging to the old architecture is found here only. It takes one down the memory lane to show that civilization survived and prospered only at places where water was found in abundance. It rightly places Palakkad district as the rice bowl of Kerala.