

## Koodal Manikkam Temple, Irinjalakkuda

By

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Irinjalakkuda is a small town which is about 25 Km from Trichur. It is believed that two streams were flowing through this place and it was called Iru chala kkuda, which later became Irinjalakkuda. This is the only temple which is dedicated to Bharatha, the younger brother of Lord Sri Rama, in India. The God is also called Sangameshwara. It is believed that a saint called Kuleepathi was doing yagas at the spot where the temple is built. There is a temple tank inside the temple which is called Kuleepathi tank. People believe it as the spot where the above saint was doing Yagnas. Today the water of this tank is only used to the worship of the God Bharatha in the temple. This temple tank does not have any other aquatic life except fishes. People believe that the fishes in this tank were the sages who used to do Yaga there. There is a custom of feeding these fish to please the God, because of this.

People believe that there was a very ancient temple at this spot but the power of the deity started diminishing. Astrologers were consulted and they told that a new Prathishta should be done. At that time some fishermen fished out four statues of Gods from the sea. Then it was decided based on a divine voice, that one of those statues would be consecrated in this place. The statue chosen was that of Bharatha. The Rama Statue was consecrated in Tripayar, the Lakshmana statue in Muzhikkulam and the Shattrugna statue in Payamel. All these places are not very far off. After the consecration, the power of the temple increased. The idol of Bharatha is five feet tall with four hands holding bow, conch, wheel and Abhaya mudra. Offering Lotus to this Lord is considered as very propitious.

During that time, the priest noticed a very red glow being the statue. The people wanted to measure the strength of the glow, which was like the glow of Manikkam (a costly gem). The only rich man in possession of such a gem was the king Of Kayankulam. He willfully gave his very costly Manikkam. But when it was taken near the glow behind the statue, the manikkam of the king got merged with the statue. From that time this temple was known as Koodal Manikkam Kshethram (The temple of added Manikkam)., Since the gem belonged to king of Kayankulam, this temple was given under his control After some time the King of Travancore conquered Kayankulam and then the temple belonged to him Thus a temple in the middle of Cochin Kingdom was owned by the king of Travancore. After independence the temple came under the control of the government.

Another peculiarity of this temple is the offering of 101 Brinjals to the Lord. This is followed because of a story. There was a devotee of the temple who suffered due to severe stomach ache. The Lord came in his dream and ordered him to offer 101 Brinjals to the Lord. His ache disappeared. Ever since this incident people offer 101 Brinjals to get cured of diseases.

The punartham (Punarvasu) star of the Makara (January –February) is celebrated as the foundation day of the temple. In the Thiruonam (Sravana) star of the month of Thulam (October-November) Puthari (new rice) festival is celebrated in this temple. People bring new rice, vegetables, Banana etc to the temple from all villages around the temple. Next

day they are offered to God and grand feast for every one is arranged with the new produce brought by them. Next day a medicine called Mukkudi is offered to the Lord and distributed to the devotees.

The temple has Poojas in the morning, noon and in the evening. For the night Pooja women are not allowed to participate .Another peculiar practice in this temple is that bells are not rung, camphor not lighted and incense not offered during worship. People believe that Lord Bharatha is doing meditation here and doing all these things would disturb him.