

## Thiruvalla Vallabha Swamy temple

By

P.R.Ramachander

This is another temple of Kerala which is one of the 108 Vaishnava Divya desams. This deity has been sung about by Thiru mangai Azhwar. It is ten km from Changanassery station which is in the rail route between Ernakulam and Thiruvananthapuram. This temple can also be approached by road or boat.

In a place called Sankaramangalam nearby there was a very devout old lady who was a devotee of Lord Vishnu She was referred to by people as Snakaramangalthu amma. .She was very particular in observing Ekadasi. It seems an ogre called Thugala (tholaga) used to trouble her a lot. One Dwadasi day she could not find any Brahmin to take food. Lord Vishnu himself took the form of a Brahmachari and came there as her guest.

Sankaramangalathamma requested him to take bath in the nearby well and come. Lord Vishnu asked her whether there are any rivers nearby. She then told him that an Asura was living near the river and was not allowing any one to take bath in the river. Lord Vishnu went to the river and killed the Tholagasura with his Sudarshana Chakra and washed the Chakra in the river. This place is presently referred to as Chakrasala ghat. When the lord returned back , there were four more Brahmins. Sankakamangalathamma served food for all the five of them in areca nut sheath (paala) Even today this feeding is done in areca nut sheath and is referred to as Paala Bhojanam.

There is another interesting story about this great devotee. It seems she was illiterate and used to calculate the occurrence of Ekadasi , by putting a stone everyday one out of the fifteen stones given to her by a literate man. . Once some Brahmins came to her house and requested for food. Sankaramangalathamma told them that it was Ekadasi. They laughed at her and told that it was Dasami. One of them was an astrologer and he used Prasna to find out the exact Thithi. When the Prasna was done in her house it showed Ekadasi but when they stepped out of the house, it showed Dasami.

It seems when Lord Vishnu came as a Brahmachari to the house of Sankaramangalathamma he consecrated Sudarshana Chakra there. This Chakra has eight corners denoting Conch, wheel, mace, lotus flower, rope, goad , bow and stick. Sacred ash called Vibhuthi is given as Prasada in this temple of Chakra. The main deity of this temple is Sri Vallabha. This is a eight foot tall statue in the standing pose which faces east. Here sandalwood paste is given instead of sacred ash. There is a story about Sri Vallabha.

It seems it was the same statue which was got made by Lord Krishna using the expertise of Viswakarma,. Lord Krishna was worshipping this statue. When his end came near he entrusted the statue to his cousin Satyaki for Consecration in a proper place. Sathyaki entrusted the Job to Lord Garuda. But unfortunately it slipped from his talons and fell in a river.

After a long time when Cheraman Perumal was ruling Kerala., God appeared in his dream and pointed out the exact location and asked him to consecrate in a temple. The king found the statue. There was an empty temple in Thiruvalla which was waiting for a suitable idol. The king consecrated the divine statue in that place. When the statue

ordered for the place came, it was consecrated in a place called Malayin Keezh. Even today the people of Malayin Keezh call their God as Thiruvalla Appan. There is an inscription on the stone on the temple indicating that it was constructed in the year 59 AD. It seems Padathi Banana that was used as an offering by Sage Durvasa when he visited the temple. Even today Padathi Pazham is offered to the God. The temple is built in such a way that if you are seeing the face of the God, you would not be able to his feet and if you are seeing his feet, you cannot see his face.

People believe that the great devotee of Vishnu called Gandakarna who used to hang two bells in his ears so that he will never hear the name of Lord Shiva attained salvation in this temple.

There is a 50 feet black granite flag pole in this temple. This flag pole is buried very deep and only a small portion is visible outside. A Garuda statue made of Panchaloha is chained to the flag pole.. It seems when Perumthachan made the Garuda, it started flying away. So he decided to chain it to the flag pole. In 1970 a new flag pole has also been installed.

During olden days women were not allowed to enter the temple.,. This was because a lady was so enchanted by the beauty of the Lord and refused to go out of the temple. Nowadays ladies do visit this temple.

In this temple the God is worshipped five times. In the early morning pooja God is worshipped as Brahmachari, in the Pandeerati pooja he is worshipped as sanyasi, in the noon Pooja he is worshipped as Vaasudeva dressed with royal dresses. In the evening Pooja he is worshipped as Narayana and in the night Pooja he is worshipped as Lakshmi Narayana. While the goddess is dressed in the usual manner, the God during this Pooja is dressed as a Sanyasi. Later they will keep all material necessary for doing pooja in the sanctum sanctorum before closing the door, in the belief that sage Durvasa would come in the night and do Pooja to the Lord.

Apart from Lord Vallabha this temple also has temples of Varaha, Dakshinamurthy, Sastha, Ganapathi, Koorain Appan, Ayal yakshi and Maya yakshi.

Performing Kathakali is one of the main forms of worship to this Lord. It seems when Vilwamangalathu Swamiyar visited this temple, he found the Lord watching Kathakali along with every one. So they keep a seat covered with silk and a keep a lit lamp near this cdivine seat , when Kathakali is performed at this temple.

In the Kumbha month (February march there is an Arattu to the God, In the Meena month (March-April) again there is a grand festival called Uthra Seeveli.