

## Thiruvappu Krishna temple

By

P.R.Ramachander

This is one of the famous temples of Krishna in Kerala which is at least 1500 years old. This temple is located in Thiruvappu, which is 6-8 km from the town of Kottayam on the shores of Meenachil River. (Vappu is the cast used by smiths to make bell metal vessels)

There are several stories about its origin. All of them talk of recovering the statue of Lord Krishna with 4 hands which was kept in an Uruli (Flat vessel made of bell metal). Here are some of the stories:-

1. This temple is connected to Mahabharata. When the Pandavas lived in the forest, Lord Krishna gave them his statue with four hands so that they can daily worship it. It seems when Pandavas finished their sojourn in the forest and wanted to go back, the people of that area, requested for that statue. . This was worshipped by the people of Cherthala. But after some time due to reasons beyond their control, they were not able to continue their worship. So they simply dropped the statue in the sea.

After a long time a great sage (some say it is Vilwamangalam Samiyar and other say it is Padmapadacharya , the disciple of Adhi Shankara) was travelling by a boat in these parts. Suddenly his boat became immobile. When some one got in to the sea to find out the reason, the sea dried at that spot and they were able to recover this statue. The divine person took the statue with him. Though he wanted to go west, the boat travelled to the east via Kunnam and Pallikkara and reached the present spot of the temple.

The divine person got down there along with the statue and found a temple of Dharma Sastha without any idol. So he consecrated the idol in that temple.

2.The above divine person got down from the boat along with the statue. But due to inclement weather he was not able to provide any further. So he kept the statue in an Uruli , which he found near the tank and went away. Later when he came, he found that the statue has got pasted to the Uruli. That Uruli belonged to an individual called Kunnan Kari Menon. As soon as he knew about the statue in his Uruli , he gave the land for temple construction and completed the temple with the help of a saint called Madappurathu Samiyar. Even today special Pushpanjali ( offering of flowers) is done on behalf of the Asram of Madappurathu Samiyar in this temple.

3.It seems Pandavas put the statue that they were worshipping along with their Akshaya Pathra in the sea , before leaving to their Agnatha Vasa. It seems the fishermen fishing in the Vembanad back waters in a place near Vechur (called Mangalathu Vila) recovered only the statue and not the vessel. They built a temple in a place called Chara Mangalam and consecrated the statue there. It seems various calamities occurred in their village. So they again put the statue in the back waters. It seems this time statue fell inside the original vessel itself. It was then the divine person referred to earlier found it out. He

found the statue as well as the vessel .His boat travelled via Kunnam and Palikkara and was not able to travel further due to dense aquatic plants. It seems the people of the area swam in to the water and made way for the boat to reach the shores.. The statue in the vessel was kept in the shore temporarily in a structure called Valiya Madam. On that day they were able to offer to the God only tender mango pickles and tender coconut water. Later the statue was shifted to the present temple. During the Arattu , the statue is taken to Valiya Madam and Tender mango and tender coconut water is offered to it even today.

The Lord faces west along with his four hands. The temple opens very early around 2 AM in the morning. Around 3 AM a special offering called Usha Payasam is offered to this lord. This is prepared using rice, jaggery , ghee , kadali banana fruit and dried coconut. When the rice is cooked well, the melted Jaggery is poured in to it till it stops by itself. This method of preparation is very peculiar to this temple.

Another peculiarity of this temple is that , the priest is given an axe as well as the key to open the door in the early morning. People believe that this God cannot tolerate hunger and so if there is any problem in opening the door with the key, the priest is permitted to break open the door with an axe. People believe that Lord Krishna's statue in the temple is of the very exhausted Krishna after he killed Kamsa. So after the Abhishekam is over, the Lord's head is first dried,, the Naivedyam offered to him and then only his body is dried.

There are five times pooja but the Deeparadhana is only after the Athazha pooja (last pooja carried out at night 7 PM ).Since people believe that the statue came from Cherthalai, the priest after the Athazha pooja asks "Is there any body from Cherthalai here who is hungry?" . It is believed that no body from Cherthalai in the temple should be hungry.

Another peculiarity of this temple is that even during eclipse, the temple is not closed. People believe that this God would become hungry. It seems once , the temple was closed during eclipse. When they reopened the door they found that the waist belt of the Lord has slipped down. Vilwamangalam Samiyar who came at that time told that , it was because God became very hungry. From then on, they stopped closing the temple during eclipse.

This temple has a very peculiar drum made of bell metal. It seems Lord Krishna announced the killing of Kamsa , playing on this drum. There is a 12 tier brass lamp in this temple gifted by a Christian devotee .This temple also has a sub temple for Bhoothanatha .All offerings to the main deity are also offered to him Outside the temple there are temples for Subramanya, Ganapathy, Yakshi , Shiva and Bhagawathy.

The temple festival is during the first ten days of the month of Medam.(april-may) .On the tenth day there is a race of Elephants like that in Guruvayur. During the festival time girl children who are less than ten years of age dress themselves like Lord Krishna and offer lamp to the Lord during morning and evening. On the tenth day of the month when the sun sets, his rays enter inside the sanctum sanctorum and this referred to as Pathaam Udayam,

Krishna's birthday during Ashtami Rohini is celebrated in this temple. Sundays and Thursdays are special in this temple and attract lot of devotes.

Another peculiar celebration of this temple is Pullattu Pooja,. It seems there was a rich nair without children in the Pullattu house. He wanted to donate all his wealth to the temple and requested them to observe his death anniversary. When astrologers consulted

the God, his consent was given. On the Thai poosam day , Pullattu Nair came inside the temple, kept all his wealth , keys to treasures and documents for all his properties before the Lord. Then he prostrated before the Lord. It seems he died there and then. Even today three special poojas one day before his death and fifteen special poojas on the day of his death are performed in his name and referred to as Pllattu Pooja.

Milk Payasam, Ghee Payasam, Appam etc are offered to the Lord usully. There is a special offering called Chathurchathadam also.