



Glory of Bharath » Bharath Darshan

Dear Sai Brothers and Sisters

This month our sojourn is to the sacred Guruvayur.

Guruvayur



Lord Guruvayurappan

Guruvayoor, the abode of Lord Sree Guruvayoorappan, is located 29 kms north west to the cultural capital of the 'God's own country', Kerala. This narrow coastline strip of land on the south western edge of Indian subcontinent is one of the 10 paradises in the world. Guruvayoor is a thriving township in Trichur district of Kerala state in the South of India, its scenic beauty and serenity are breath taking. Guruvayoorappan is the chief diety here - The God which hears the prayers of its pilgrims. Guruvayoorappan is adorned with the holy tulasi (Basil) garland, and pearl necklace the Lord here appears in all radiance to bless the devotees.

The presiding deity in the Garbhagraha (central shrine) is Mahavishnu, worshipped according to the pooja routines laid down by Adi Sankaracharya and later written in to the Tantrasamuchaya by Chennas Narayanan Namboodiri (born in 1427). The Chennas Namboodiris are the hereditary Tantri of Guruvayur temple. The people at large, however, invoke the Lord as UNNIKRISHNA or BALAKRISHNA.

Guruvayur became divine on account of the "tapas" performed by Lord Siva and later by the Prechethas (the ten sons of Pracheenabarhis and Suvarna are together called Prechethas) in the Rudratheertham - the sacred tank on the northern side of the present temple - where Lord Guruvayurappan has His Arattu (holy bath on the last day of Annual Utsavam). Siva worshipped Mahavishnu for years under the waters of the Rudratheertham (hence the name Rudratheertham due to the presence of Rudra, Siva). Prechethas came to this place to do tapas to attain "prajapathithwam" (king of all kings) from Lord Mahavishnu. Sensing the motive of Prechethas, Lord Siva emerged out of the Rudratheertham and revealed to them the "Rudrageetham", a hymn in praise of Mahavishnu. Siva suggested them to chant it with all their heart to get their wishes fulfilled. The Princes won the favour of Mahavishnu after rigorous tapas for 10,000 years under the waters of Rudratheertham chanting Rudrageetham.



The sacred temple pond

According to the legends, in ancient days Rudratheertham (present Arattukulam) extended up to Mammiyur and Thamarayur (about 3.00 kms) towards north and was known for its lotus flowers. Melpathur's Narayaneeyam refers to it as the lovely lake of lotus.

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Sanctity of the idol

The idol of Guruvayur temple is unique, since it is carved out of "Paathalanjana Sila", and is considered extremely sacred. This idol was once worshipped by Mahavishnu in Vaikunta. Vishnu handed it over to Brahma. King Suthapas and his wife who worshipped Brahma for a child received this idol from Brahma. He advised them to start worshipping the idol. Once Lord Vishnu appeared before them and blessed them that he himself will be born as their child in their three re-births in three different forms and in three different situations. Thus they got the good fortune to worship the same deity in all three rebirths. They gave birth to Prasnigarbhan who gave to the world the practice of Brahmacharya Vrata (Celibacy) . In their next birth, Suthapas and his wife were born as Kasyapa and Adithi . Their son in that birth was Vamana. The third rebirth was as Vasudeva and Devaki. The Lord Krishna was born as their eighth son. In the long run, the Lord Krishna himself installed this idol in Dwaraka and worshipped it.

Sanctity of installation

From Mahavishnu the sacred idol has passed through the hands of Brahma, Suthapas, Kasyapa, Vasudeva, Sree Krishna and finally at the time of Krishna's ascension to Vaikunta, he instructed Udhava to entrust Brahaspathi (the Guru of Devas) with the task of taking the idol to a suitable place where people could worship it, so as to get salvation in Kaliyuga. A deluge had closed in on Dwaraka, but Guru salvaged the idol with the help of his prime disciple, Vayu. Guru and Vayu went around the world in search of an ideal place. They met Parasurama who lead them to a lush green spot with a beautiful lotus tank where they felt the presence of Lord Siva.



The temple

Lord Siva along with Parvathy welcomed them and said , "This is the same spot you are looking for, here it was, I imparted the Rudrageetham to the Prechethas" .The idol was installed there. Siva with Parvathy left to the opposite bank, at Mammiyur. Siva permitted Guru and Vayu to perform the consecration rites and blessed them that henceforth this place would be known as GURUVAYUR (since the installation was done by Guru and Vayu). Vishwakarma, the divine architect was requested to build a Temple , which he made in such a way that on the day of Vishu (Summer equinox), the sun himself makes his obeisance . His first rays on that day fall straight on the Lord's feet. The idol was installed in the solar month of Kumbha. (February - March). The ceremony was begun on the seventh asterism of Pooyam (Puozhya) and completed on the day of Anizham (Anuradha).

As the idol was once worshiped by the Lord Mahavishnu himself in Vaikunta, Guruvayur is considered to be " Bhooloka Vaikunta " - the heaven on earth.

Sreekovil

The Sreekovil (Sanctum Sanctorum) is designed in 2 layers with copper sheet roofing plated with gold. The deity is in the traditionally orthodox form of Mahavishnu, with all the compliments - four arms each carrying sankh (conch), chakra(wheel), gadha (club) and padmam (lotus). The Moolavighraha (main idol) is made of Pathalanjana Shila and is considered extremely sacred.

There are two more idols one of silver and the other of gold of which the silver idol is more older. These are used for the seeveli and other processions. Generally the gold idol is GURUVAYUR DEVASWOM used and the silver idol which is more older is taken out only for Arattu and on a few special occasions. There is a repletion of traditional mural paintings on all the three sides, depicting sequences from puranic tales and Krishnaleela. There is amorous and erotic accent in the murals. There are 101 bells, all made of silver and plated with gold. Sopanam, the steps leading to the Sreekovil, are made of stone with carvings and designs of attractive craftsmanship.

Our sojourn continues next month...Till then Sai Ram