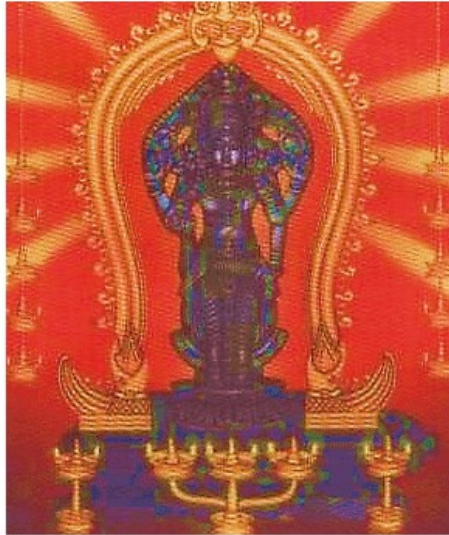




Glory of Bharath » Bharath Darshan

This month our sojourn is to the sacred Thrikkakara in Kerala - God's own country to behold the Lord in his dwarf incarnation namely Vamana.

Thrikkakara Vamana Moorthy Temple



Thrikkakara Temple is one of the few temples in India dedicated to Lord Vamana the fifth incarnation of Lord Vishnu. It is situated in Thrikkakara, 2 kilometers east of Idapally near Cochi. The name Thrikkakara means the holy place where Lord placed His foot. Thiru-kal-kari later became Thrikkakara

The Legend

Mahabali was an efficient and popular Asura king. His kingdom stretched the earth, the patala (the underground), and was threatening the skies. The gods (suras) grew worried of Mahabali's rule and popularity. Vishnu, in his avatar as Vamana, asked Mahabali for a piece of land only three paces wide. Bali, ever the generous king, granted this wish, whereupon Vamana grew to an immense size and covered the heavens with one step and the earth with another. There was no space left for Vamana to measure his third pace. "Where is my third foot of space?" asked Vamana. Tricked by this deceit, but as one who would never go back on his promises, Mahabali offered his own head for Vamana to place his third step. These events were happened at this place. As he was pushed down into Suthala, King Bali made a last request. He requested that he be allowed to visit Kerala once in a year to ensure that his people were still happy, well fed and content. Lord Vishnu was pleased to grant Mahabali his wish. Mahabali comes to visit his people and his land during Onam. This is the legend behind the Onam festival. Another legend associated with this temple is that Kapila maharshi did penance here and Vishnu pleased with the rishi's penance appeared before the rishi. At the behest of the rishi, Vishnu decided to stay in this place.

In pasurams of Nammalvar Thrikkakara is referred as Thirukkaatkarai, Lord Vamana as Sree Kaatkarai Appa Perumal and Thayar (Mahalakahmi) as Perunselva Naayaki or Vaathsalya valli.

The traditional festival of Kerala - Onam historically too related with this temple. The 10 day long annual festival in this temple is held in the month of Chingam (August - September). The utsavam begins with kodiyyettu on Atham day and ends with arattu on Thiruvonam day. Thiruvonam is the birth day of Lord Vamanamoorthy. Those who could not attend this utsavam celebrated it in their own home by making beautiful Pookkalam and by offering special nivedyams to Thrikkakkarayappan. This was strictly followed in every home because it was an order given by the then ruling Cheraman Perumal, the king of Kerala. These celebrations and special offerings to Lord Vamana is now commonly known as Onam. The famous Athachamayam at Tripunithura was a triumphant march of the Maharaja of Kochi, with or without military intent from Tripunithura, the then capital of the Cochin state, to the Vamana Temple at Thrikkakara to attend the kodiyyettu ceremony. It is merely a celebration to herald Onam, the festival of peace and equity, remembering the days when everything was in abundance. The Onasadya or the Onam feast will be held on Thiruvonam day in a grand manner in the temple with a large number of people cutting across religious barriers participating in it.



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In this temple there are two separate sreekovils for Lord Vamana and Lord Shiva. Five poojas - Ushapooja, Ethruthapooja, Pantheeradypooja, Uchapooja and Athazhapooja - and three Sheevelis- Ethrutha Sheeveli, Ucha Sheeveli and Athazha Sheeveli are conducted daily. The sub-deities of Vamana temple are Sree Bhagavathi, Sastha, Gopalakrishna, Nagam, Rakshass and Yakshi. The Shivalinga in this temple is believed to be worshiped by Mahabali himself and is situated on the southern side of Vamana shrine. Devotees must visit the Shiva shrine before visiting Vamana shrine. The Shiva temple or Thekkumkara Thevar temple has shrines of Parvathi, Durga, Bhagavathi, Subramanian and Ganapathy. It is interesting to note in this context that though Thrikkakkara Appan or Vamana is worshipped during Onam celebrations, Mathevar or Mahadevar is also worshipped with equal fervour and the reason remains unexplained. The temple pond in the northern side is called Kapila Theertham and is considered holy. Only the temple priests are allowed to enter into this pond compound. The seat of King Mahabali is located in front of the Mahadeva sreekovil.

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