

father and, after killing His evil uncle, Kamsa and settling in Dwaraka, He built a temple in which to install it.

Shortly before Krishna ascended to Vaikuntam, He informed His disciple Uddhava that the purpose of His time on earth was now over. Uddhava was distraught on hearing this, but Krishna calmed him down with the assurance that He would not only manifest Himself in the idol but ward off the evil effects of *Kali-Yuga* by showering blessings on His devotees.²³ Meanwhile, He instructed Uddhava to care for the idol during the forthcoming submergence of Dwaraka and ensure that Brihaspathy, the teacher of the gods and usually referred to as ‘Guru’, had it re-installed in India’s ‘most sacred place’.

Krishna then departed, and 7 days after the beginning of *Kali-Yuga*, Dwaraka sank into the underwater realm of the God Varuna.

When Guru, accompanied by his disciple, the Wind God, Vayu, went to collect the idol, they found it was being tossed about in an angry sea and had to request Varuna to calm the waves. As soon as He did so, the idol was retrieved and placed on Vayu’s head. They then departed on their long journey through India, intent on fulfilling Krishna’s wishes.

Meanwhile processions of patients seeking relief from the torments of rheumatism were swarming into the Thrissur *ashram* of Parasurama, Vishnu’s sixth incarnation. A short time earlier, Sage Narada had visited the *ashram* and been so distraught at seeing so many suffering people that he instructed Parasurama to go in search of the idol since it had the power to cure people. Parasurama met Guru and Vayu just as they entered Kerala, and, after hearing their story, took them to a vast lake filled with beautiful lotuses, the same stretch of water from which, eons earlier, Siva had welcomed the Prachetas. Once again, Siva, now accompanied by His consort Parvathy, rose up from His underwater meditation, and after telling Guru and Vayu that their mission was known to Him, directed them to install the sacred idol

nearby, in a small shrine that had long ago been designated for the purpose.

However, when Guru and Vayu saw the shrine, they hesitated, seeing that it was already occupied by a beautiful Goddess, a Goddess who smiled and declared that She too had been expecting the Lord and would now move to seat Herself beneath a nearby tree—a move that resulted in Her being known as Edathariyathukavil, the Goddess who Moved to the Left.

Guru and Vayu then watched, praying as Siva, Parvathy and Parasurama chanted and installed the sacred idol. When the ceremony was over Parasurama returned to his *ashram*, satisfied that all those who worshipped the newly installed idol would be cured of their rheumatism while Siva and Parvathy shifted to the northern bank of the great lake to occupy what is now the Mammiyur Siva Temple. Guru and Vayu then invited Viswakarma, the Divine Architect of the Universe, to build the temple that eventually took its name from the combination of their two names, but which, since it enshrines the idol once worshipped by Vishnu in Vaikuntam, is also known as Bhooloka Vaikuntam, the Heaven of Heavens on Earth.

Despite there being numerous anecdotes about Guruvayur, just one more is relevant to the temple’s earliest days. It starts during Krishna’s lifetime with King Parikshit, a grandson of the Pandava princes, asking Sage Suka who would rule after Krishna. The sage painted a grim picture of how war, famine and destruction would follow Krishna’s death but assured Parikshit that in the next *yuga*, Vishnu would incarnate as Kalki, a Brahmin’s son, to destroy all evil and bring peace—until the time came for the entire cycle to recommence.

After Suka had finished speaking, Parikshit touched his feet and told him how much he had benefited from his words since he was no longer afraid of the serpent he knew was destined to kill him. All he asked was to be left alone so that he could die contemplating Vishnu. Suka and other sages blessed him and withdrew, leaving Parikshit in deep meditation as Takshaka, the King of Serpents came

²³There are 4 *yugas*: Krita (17,28,000 years), Treta (12,96,000 years), Dwapara (8,64,000 years) and Kali—the present *yuga* (4,32,000 years).