

Brhmotsavam

What are Utsavams performed?

¹Utsavams are festivals celebrated at the temples. Generally everyone enjoys festivals. But with temples there is also another reason to celebrate an utsavam. Devotees come to temples with different kinds of wishes performing different deeds with or without mental or physical cleanliness. Many visit the holy places without having much knowledge about the proper rules to visit a holy place. So these are the reasons to pollute any atmosphere. Utsavams are celebrated mainly to ward off the various pollutions created at the temple atmosphere due to many reasons. At the same time festive atmosphere is created, people from outside are visiting their relatives, roadside shops are sprouted selling different articles suitable to children and elders. Business and also entertainment for the people thrive. Hence people are happy and enjoy the festivals. During the Utsava the deity/deities are taken in possession and devotees who are otherwise not able to visit the temple can have Darshan of the Gods from their own house also.

What is Brhmotsavam?

Brhmotsavam is a big festival, which is celebrated every year in temples. As per legend it is told that Lord Brahma started it and it is believed that during this festival he himself presides over the festival, hence the name “Brhmotsavam)”. After the utsavam the people are able to gain the blessings of the presiding Deity in a purified and happy atmosphere. During the utsavams the presiding deity and other deities of the temple are taken in processeion through important streets so the people who are unable to visit temple also can gain the blessings.

Generally Brhmotsavam is celebrated in all the temples big or small according to their monetary capacity. It must be celebrated because during this time Yagasala (Homa guntams), Initialising the God in the Kalasam (Pot), ²Japa on both the times mornings & evenings, everyday ³Abhisheka for the ⁴Moolavar with the Kalasa Jalam (water) etc. are performed which help to purify the atmosphere.

¹ Festival

² repeated chanting of God's name

³ giving bath

⁴ God in the Sanctum & Sanctorum

Kamakshi temple Brhmotsavam

At Kamakshi temple the Brhmotsavam is started on Tamil month 'Masi'. Generally the festival starts on the star 'Aswini'. It is scheduled for 23 days as follows:

1st day for Lord Ganesh,

2nd to 11th day of Utsava Kamakshi Devi is taken on procession outside the temple.

12th to 20th day is '⁵Vidaiyattri', giving Darshan to people in the temple premises in a relaxed manner sitting in a swing.

21st to 23 giving Darshan to people in a very relaxed manner without much pomp and show.

10th day of the festival falls on 'Masimaga' day - i.e. the star Magam as it is special for this month (on this day taking holy bath at Mahamaga tank at a place called Kumbakonam at Tanjore district of Tamilnadu is also considered as auspicious).
Bramorchavam (10 days)

First day morning 'Mrithsahanam' (taking out mud from Bilwa tree root) is performed in front of Asthra Devi at Mritheshwar temple.

Every day of the urchava 'Asthra Devi') accompanies Urchava Kamakshi Devi in the Veedhi Ula. Urchava Lakshmi Devi and Urchava Saraswathi are also placed with Urchava Kamakshi during the procession. Urchava Theerthavari is performed only for Asthra Devi in front of Utsava Kamakshi.

Everyday twice in the Yagasala 'Kalasa sthapanam', 'Homam', Japa are performed and abhisheka for the Moola Kamakshi is performed with the Kalasa water.

1st day - Lord Ganesha ⁶Veedhi vula in 4 RajaVeedhi

2nd day - Morning 'Dvija Arohanam' (Flag hoisting) According to legend, after this function people from the town should not go out side the town until Dvija Avarohnam (Lowering down the Flag.) is done. (But nowadays it may not be possible for people to follow this as many have started to go for job outside town). The temple priests have Rakshabandhanam and become eligible for performing pooja for the urchavam. From this day onwards after Kalasabhikesham, morning and evening Goddess Kamakshi (⁷Urchavar) go around the four Rajaveedees in different Vahana (carriers) like Rishibha, Deer etc. Urchava Adi Shankara also goes with Kamakshi Devi in a Pallakku (Planquin)

The following are the carriers on which Sri Kamakshi Devi is taken out:-

⁵ relaxation

⁶ procession

⁷ The idle made out of Panchaloka

Days of the urchavam	Morning	Evening	
2 nd	Rishabha(bull)	Maan (deer)	
3 rd	Makhara (Fish)	Chandran (Moon)	
4 th	Simmam(lion)	Yaana (Elephant)	
5 th	Suriyan (Sun)	Hamsam(	
6 th	Pallakku(Palaquin) Alankara	Naga (Snake)	Will be visiting to the places of the invitees known as 'Mandahappadi'
7 th	Chapparam	Kili (Parrot)	
8 th	Wooden chariot	--	From morning till evening stays in the shankar. That day both the abhisheka are performed morning itself. So no vedhi vula in the evening
9 th	Bhadhra Peetam(Kedayam)	Kudhirai (Horse)	
10 th	Aal mel Pa (different pallakku)	Silver Chariot	Special crackers are busted on this night. Starts late night.
11 th	Sarabha Pakshi (Bird human body) and ⁸ Thee in the temple tank	Kalpaha V (Mango leave placed)	Evening after Kalasabhishekam Dvijavar (lowering the flag)
12 th	-	Mahameru	Known as Kamakoti Vimanam, looks like a temple

12th day night after the procession, The temple priests have Raksha Bandana Visarjanam. (Removal of Rakshai). Urchava Kamakshi Devi is placed inside the Moolavar, the Sanctum & Sanctorum.

Vidaiyatri Urchavam

13th day early morning ⁹Viswaroopa darsanam for public at Moolasthanam with Urchava Ambal. Cow with her child is also made to stand in front of her showing their back to the deity. Moola Kamakshi has Chandana Kappu (Sandal Paste) on this day. Vidaiyatri Urchavam starts from that day. Goddess Kamakshi will be giving Darshan in the temple premises in full attire with jewels sitting in the Unjal (swing) in a relaxed manner. This will go on for 9 days. During this time chanting of Veda mantras and playing of different instruments are taking place. In the mean time, 8th day both Moola Kamakshi & Urchava Kamakshi have Chandana Kappu. 9th day evening Urchava Kamakshi will go around inside the temple in Pushpa (flower) Pallaku.

Payatankanchi Vidaiyatri

For the next 3 days Payatankanchi Vidaiyatri is performed. It will be done in the Urchava Kamakshi's place known as 'Asthanam'. Goddess giving darshan in a very relaxed manner in loose clothes and simple jewels to remove the fatigue of the busy schedule She underwent for the past 18 days. During this time green dal kheer, soaked broken green dhal and powdered jaggery is offered to the Goddess for ushna (heat) santhi.

⁸ giving bath in the temple tank

⁹ Having darshan immediately after door is opened

MONTHLY URCHAVAMS OF SRI KAMAKSHI

Every month 'Pancha Parva Urchava' is performed in the temple. Pancha Parva is

1. First day of the month
2. Pournamai (Full moon) day.
3. Amavasai (New moon day)
4. Fridays
5. On Sri Kamakshi's birth star 'Pooram'.

On all these days procession of Sri Utsava Kamakshi in the Prakara of the temple in the "Golden chariot" is performed. On every Full moon day 'Nava Varna Pooja' is performed for the Moola Kamakshi. During Navarathri & Brahmorchava time Golden chariot procession will not be there.

Following are the special functions held in the temple on the Tamil months:

1. Chithrai (April 14th – May 14th)

1.1. Tamil New Year Day. Sri Kamakshi goes around the 4 Raja Veedhies in Golden Chariot.

1.2. Celebration of Adi Shankara Jayanthi at Sri Kamakshi temple

Sri Adi Shankara was born on Sukla Panchami day of Nandana (Cyclic year) Varsha at Kalady, Kerala. His birth star is Arudhra. He lived for thirty-two years between 509 - 477 BC.

Every year on Vaisaka Sukla Panchami day (April – May) Adi Sankara Jayanthi is celebrated world over. At Sri Kamakshi temple it is observed for 10 days starting from Sukla Panchami day.

During this time, everyday evening around 7 pm, Utsava Acharyal from his sanctum in the temple premises, taken and placed in front of Sri Kamakshi Devi in the Moolavar Sannidhi and 10 slokas from Soundharyalahari is recited there by Pundits. After each sloka Arthi is performed. Last day, as per the legend Adi Shankara requests Kamakshi Devi to go out along with him. Accordingly Sri Kamakshi Devi and Sri Adi Shankara are taken as procession on the 10th day around 4 Raja Veedhies and the procession ends at Sukhravara Mandapam in the temple. The last 10 slokas from Soundaryalahari is recited there. Then Acharyal is honoured with ¹⁰Parivattam and garland. Sri Adi Sankara is taken around Sri Kamakshi thrice and returns to his Sannidhi. Sri Kamakshi also returns back to her sanctum.

¹⁰ Tying a silk cloth around the head by the authorities

This year Adi Sankara Jayanthi is to be celebrated between 21st and 29th of April 2007.

Every month on Sukla Panchami day morning at Acharya Sannidhi 'Avahanti Homam' and Chanting of Vedas are performed. Bruhadaranya Upanishad is also recited on that day.

2. Vaikasi (May 15th - June 14th)

Vasanthorchavam for 3 days. Sri Utsava Kamakshi is taken to Thatththuva Mandapam in the evening to give darshan. This festival time is fixed according to Perumal temple Garuda Sevai. Previous day to Garuda Sevai Vasanthorchavam starts at Sri Kamakshi temple. Generally Garuda Sevai will be on the star Visaka of Vaikasi. So Vasanthorchavam at Kamakshi temple starts on the day of 'Swathi' Nakshathra.

3. Ani (June 15th - July 16)

Vyasa pooja and Chaturmasa viratha at Sri Kamakshi Temple

Vyasa Pooja, which is also known as 'Guru Poornima' performed on Pournami (full moon) day of the Tamil month Ani. This is the starting day for 'Chaturmasya Vratam'. All Sanyasins observe Chaturmasya Vratam. They observe this vratham for full two months. This vratham starts from Vyasa Pooja day. As per the legend, even now Sri Adi Sankara also observes this vratham at Sri Kamakshi Devi temple. On that day, Utsava Adi Sankara goes to Sara Teethe tank and abhisheka is performed to Acharya at the Kasi Viswanatha temple located there. Then Acharya returns to Sri Kamakshi temple and performs Vyasa Pooja. This Vratam is observed for 2 months. These two months Adi Sankara will not come out of the temple. Last day of the Vratam, Utsava Adi Shankara is taken out in a procession, which is called as 'Viswaroopa Yathra'. That day morning, the pooja to be performed for Sri Kamakshi Devi for the whole day, is completed in the morning itself. When Sri Acharya starts for Viswaroopa Yathra the temple is closed for public. Sri Acharya goes to Upanishad Brahmendrar Madam (which is named after a Sanyasi called Brahmendra who has written Bhashya for 108 Upanishads) located on the way to Kailasanathar temple. After abhisheka and pooja at the madam, Sri Acharya returns to temple only in the evening and then only the Kamakshi Devi temple is opened for public.

4. Aadi (July 17th - August 16th)

Last Friday of Aadi month Sri Utsava Kamakshi is taken in a procession around the 4 Raja Veedhi in the evening.

5. Avani (August 17th – September 16th)

Ganesha Chathurthi. Evening Utsava Moorthy of Lord Ganesh is taken around the 4 Raja Veedis.

6. Purattasi (September 17th – October 17th)

Saradh Navarathri. This festival goes for 10 days starting from the next day of Amavasya day (New moon day). As per legend getting permission from Kamakshi for the Navarathri Urchavam is obtained first, next Rakshabandanam for Sri Moola Kamakshi, Varahi Rakshabandanam, Chandi Homam at Varahi Sannidhi, are performed on the first day. Sri Varahi Sannidhi is located inside Gayatri Mandapam. Evening 'Mrithsahanam' (Taking mud from the Bilwa tree root) is performed in front of Utsava Asthra Devi and Vasthushanthi Homa is also performed.

Everyday Mornings and Evenings Homa is performed in the Yagasala. Afternoons Nava Varna pooja and pooja for a Kanya is performed. In the evenings, after Arthi Well decorated Sri Uthsava Kamakshi is taken to Golu Mandapam and performs Sura Samharam. Music programs are arranged during this time as a tribute to Sri Kamakshi. People enjoy the music program. Uthsava Kamakshi is also accompanied by Utsava Lakshmi & Saraswathi.

8th day is known as Durgashtami. Sri Uthsava Kamakshi with Sri Durga is taken around in a procession inside the temple and concluding ceremony of Sura Samhara is performed.

9th day Sri Uthsava Kamakshi is dressed as Goddess Saraswathi and giving darshan to the public in Golu Mandapam.

10th day Vijayadasami day.

Morning after Homa in the Yaga sala, Pooja for 1 Kanya (small girl), 1 Suvasini (elderly Sumangali), 1 Vadugan (Bramhachari) is performed near Sri chakra inside the Moolavar Ambal Sannidhi. After this 'Theerthavari' for Asthra Devi is performed in the temple tank. Evening after Poornahudhi kalasabhishekam for Sri Moola Kamakshi is performed. Then Uthsava Kamakshi is taken out to the front of the temple and sends arrow in a Vanni tree. After this Sri Utsava Kamakshi is taken around in a procession inside the temple in Golden chariot. 10 sets of Nagaswaram are performed till early morning. Next day Sahasra Swarna Kalasa Abhishekam is

performed for Sri Moola Kamakshi. Thus Saradh Navarathri closing ceremony is performed.

7. Aipasi (October 18th – November 16th)

7.1. On Pournami day (Full moon day) Annabhishekam (decorating goddess with cooked rice and raw vegetables, fruits etc)

7.2. Deepavali day morning Sri Utsava Kamakshi is taken in a procession around the 4 Raja veedhi.

7.3. In this month Star 'Pooram' day, is celebrated as Sri Kamakshi Devi's birthday. Evening milk Abhishekam is performed in 'Pilakasam' located in Moolavar Sannidhi. Then Urchava Kamakshi is taken to Poora Mandapam located inside the temple premises and people have darshan. Soaked whole green dhal is offered for Sri Kamakshi as Neivedyam.

8. Karthigai (November 17th to December 15th)

On Barani Deepam day Barani Homa is performed in the temple. This is also known as Annamalai deepam day. Chokkappanai fire (a special fire lighted in front of the temples made out of dried palm wood and leaves.) is lighted on that day evening which is witnessed by Sri Utsava Kamakshi with the public. Next day is known as 'Sarvalaya Deepam' Evening Sri Uthsava Kamakshi is taken in a procession around 4 Raja Veedis.

9. Margazhi (December 16th – January 14th)

9.1. This month every day the morning pooja is performed during Ushath Kalam (morning between 4.30 to 6 am.) This early morning is known as Brahma Muhurtham.

9.2. Arudhra Darsanam: The is celebrated on the Star 'Arudhra'. Ghee Abhishekam for Moola Kamakshi and given bath in hot water. Then Urchava Kamakshi is taken around the 4 Raja Veedhi.

Last week of the month is celebrated as Kanu Urchavam. It goes for 7 days. On the day of Kanu (which falls in the month of 'Thai', next day to Pongal) evening after performing 'Cow Pooja' ('Gou' Pooja) Sri Utsava Kamakshi is taken out till the end of the road and taken back to Kanu Mandapam. Sri Utsava Kamakshi has

Abhishekam at Kanu Mandapam around 6 pm. 'Niraimani' (Pandal decorated with Vegetables) is tied at Urchava Kamakshi Sannidhi.

10. Thai (January 15th to February 12th)

On this month only Kanu festival at the beginning is celebrated.

11. Masi (February 13th - March 14th)

Brahmorchavam (Given separately)

12. Panguni (March 15th - April 13th)

12.1. Theppam (Float festival) for 3 days at Okkapiranthan Tank. It starts on the star 'Ayilyam'. On the star 'Utthiram' day Sri Utsava Kamakshi is taken to 'Okkapiranthan tank' in the evening.

12.2. Vasantha Navarathri for 9 days. Starts on Sukla Paksha Prathamai and concludes on Sri Rama Navami day. During this time 'Nava Varna' Pooja is performed every afternoon for Sri Kamakshi Devi. Evenings Veda parayanam for two hours at Yagasala by Veda Pundits.

Thus the festivals are celebrated at Sri Kamakshi Devi temple every year for the benefit of the people.