**VELLAKKALLUMKAL TEMPLE**

**KOTHALA**

Vellakkallumkal Aiswarya Gandharva Swami Temple is situated in the beautiful village of Kothala, Kottayam District in Kerala. The gives equal importance to both Lord Gandharva and goddess Bhagavathi. Apart from the main deities Lord Mahavishnu, Lord Shiva, Snake goddesses and Navagrahas are worshipped as sub-dieties. The hereditary Thanthri of the temple is Puthumana Namboothiries. There will be pooja on every 2nd Sunday of Malayalam month.

**HISTORY**

During the 18th century, a family from the place of Vellankalloor near Iringalakkuda of Thrissur district came to, first at Edappally, then at Edamattam and then to Kothala. It is believed that the family name Vellakkallumkal came from Vellankalloor. Then matriarchy system was prevalent and the family was ruled by women. The orthodox Nair family at that time had a practice of worshipping Gandharva for the well being of the members of the family. An elderly woman of this family, who was a spinster and an ardent worshipper of Gandharva had got the ‘darshan’ of Gandharva and he promised that he would protect all the coming generations of the family. And for that gandharva the temple was built and an ancestor who made the rules for poojas was also worshipped as Yogeeshvaran in the temple. The Gandharvaswami is believed to be the reincarnation of Kamadeva as the son of Sree Krishna and Rugmini. Since the worship od Gandharva brings wealth and prosperity to the family, he is also called as Aiswarya Gandharvan.

**GANDHARVAN PATTU**

The ritual is performed only in the temples of Gandharva. The ceremony is organized to invoke Gandharvan (God of prosperity) for the prosperity of the family. The people who conduct the ceremont sing traditional songs to invoke the ‘Kalam’ (meaning drawing) on the floor using natural dyes, colour powders, leaves etc.a boy and a girl below the age of 10 years sit in the Pandal representing Gandharva Swami and Yakshiamma and the songs are sung. After a lengthy spell of singing the boy and the girl may get into a trance and they may dance with the tempo of the song. Then they go round the Pandal and start sweeping the ‘Kalam’ with a Pookula (flower of coconut tree). At the end of the ceremony the whole ‘Kalam’ is swept and all the floral arrangements etc. are thrown.