

How to do Irumudi Kettu for Sabarimala Ayyappa Temple?

Ayyappa Devotees visiting the Sabarimala Temple carry the Irumudi – a specially designed bag with two compartments. This ceremony is referred as Kettunira or Palli Kettu. The front portion of the bag is meant for keeping the puja articles and other offerings to the deities at Sabarimala. The other compartment is meant for holding the personal belongings.

But nowadays both the compartments are filled with puja items. Earlier, the journey used to be of two to three days and therefore people used to carry provisions in the second compartment.

Puja Items Needed

A coconut filled with Ghee

Two coconuts

Arecanut (Supari)

Betel leaf

Coins

Turmeric Powder

Sandal

Vibhuthi (Sacred Ash)

Rose Water

Rice

Avil (Beaten rice)

Malar (Puffed rice)

Jaggery or Small banana

Kalkandam (Sugar Candy)

Agarbathis

Camphor

Pepper (For Vavar)

Small bottle of honey (optional)

Dry grape (optional)

Towels (for personal use)

While buying the bag, make sure that it has enough space and can hold the puja items.

The 'kettunira' ceremony is done on the day of the pilgrimage. It is conducted usually in one's own home or at a nearby temple.

How to prepare the ghee-filled coconut?

Take a small or medium sized ripe coconut. Polish the shell. Pierce a hole through anyone of the eye of the coconut. Drain the water and leave it to dry. (This should be done a few hours before the kettunira ceremony)

After praying to Lord Ganesha and to Ayyappa, it is time to fill the 'mudra' coconut with ghee. This ghee-filled coconut is the main offering to Lord Ayyappa.

This should be done by the devotee visiting the shrine by chanting 'Swami Sharanam.' After completely filling the coconut with fresh ghee, the opening of the coconut is corked and sealed using wax or other seals.

Filling the Front portion of the Bag

- Rice is taken with both hands and is dropped into the front compartment of the Irumudi. This is done three times. Some devotees put the first rice along with a betel leaf. Family members can also fill rice in the front portion.
- The ghee-filled coconut is then placed on top of the rice in the front compartment.
- Coins, money, betel leaves and arecanut are also placed on top of the rice.
- Other puja articles are separately wrapped and placed in the compartment this include – camphor, incense sticks, rose water, jaggery, sandal paste, vibhuthi.

Filling the Rear portion of the Bag

- Two coconuts – one for breaking at the time of climbing the sacred 18 steps and another for breaking while coming out of the shrine.
- Malar, avil, turmeric powder, and kumkum are separately packed and kept for Malikappurathamma in the rear portion.
- Pepper is taken in this compartment of Vavar Swami.

If you want to fill the rear portion of the bag with personal items then these above mentioned puja items too can be filled in the front portion.

Once the Irumudi is filled, it symbolically represents the deity and it is held reverentially and is not kept on the ground. Usually it is placed on a sheet or wollen rug. If the journey is for more than one day, Pujas are done in the morning and evening on the Irumudi. While walking, the Irumudi is balanced on the head.