

Attukal BHagawathy Kshethram, Trivandrum

(From the web site of the temple : www.attukal.org/)



Mythological Background

The story goes that the Goddess Bhagavathy revealed herself to a fervent devotee of a notable family viz. Mulluveetil family. It is said that one evening a young girl appeared before the head of the family while he was performing his oblations in the Killi river and requested him to help her cross the river. Impressed by her charismatic demeanor, the- old man bent before her with awe and reverence and not only helped her cross the river but took her to his house nearby. Strangely enough, while the household members were amidst preparations for intending a warm welcome to the young girl, she vanished. That very night the Goddess Bhagavathy appeared as an icon before the old man in his dream and demanded that he should establish an abode for her in the nearby sacred ground of shrubs and herbs (kavu), at a consecrated spot marked by three lines. The next morning the old man went to the spot revealed to him in the dream and to his great surprise he did find three marks indented on the ground. He lost no time in erecting a temple on this consecrated spot to house the Goddess. Many years later, the building was renovated by the local devotees. They also installed a beautiful and majestic icon of the Deity with four arms, bearing weapons of destruction in each, like spear, sword, skull, shield etc. The consecration ceremony of this Exalted Being was performed by no less a person than the high priest of the Badarinath Temple.

The Attukal Bhagavathy Temple, one of the ancient temples of South India, is popularly described as Sabarimala of the Women, as women form the major portion of devotees. The Goddess in the temple of Attukal is worshipped as the Supreme Mother, creator of all living beings and the mighty preserver as well as destroyer of them all. The pilgrims from all over the country, who visit Sree Padmanabha Swamy Temple and worship the Lord, do not consider their visits complete without the visit to the shrine of the supreme Mother Attukalamma. Vishnumaya took the incarnation of Bhagavathy to annihilate the evil and protect the good in the world in the present Era namely Kaliyuga.

According to mythology, Attukal Bhagavathy is supposed to be the divinised form of Kannaki, the famous heroine of Chilapathikaram, written by Elenkovadikal, the Tamil Poet. The story goes that after the destruction of ancient city of Madurai, Kannaki left the city and reached Kerala via Kanyakumari and on the way to Kodungalloor took a sojourn at Attukal. Kannaki is supposed to be the incarnation of Parvathy, the consort of Paramasiva. The all powerful and benign Attukal Bhagavathy reigns eternally supreme at Attukal and nurses devotees as a mother does her children. Thousands of devotees from far and near flock to the Temple to bend before the Goddess with awe and reverence to prostrate and redress their affliction and agony.

The Pongala Mahotsavam is the most important festival of Attukal Bhagavathy Temple. The offering of Pongala is a special temple practice prevalent in the southern part of Kerala and some parts of Tamilnadu. It is a ten-day programme commencing on the Karthika star of the Malayalam month of Makaram-Kumbham (February-March) and closing with the sacrificial offering known as Kuruthitharpanam at night. On the ninth day of the festival the world famous Attukal Pongala

Mahotsavam takes place. The entire area of about 5 kilometre radius around temple with premises of houses of people of all caste, creed and religion, open fields, roads, commercial institutions, premises of Government offices etc. emerges as a consecrated ground for observing Pongala rituals for lakhs of women devotees assembling from different parts of Kerala and outside. The ceremony is exclusively confined to women folk and the enormous crowd, which gathers in Thiruvananthapuram on this auspicious day is reminiscent of the Kumbhamela Festival of North India.

The other festivals in this temple are:

1. Mandala Vratam - Festival in connection with the annual Utsavam of Sabarimala
2. Vinayaka Chaturthi - Pooja to the Lord Ganapathy
3. Pooja Vaypu - Identical to Dussera festival (Saraswathy Pooja and Vidyarambham)
4. Sivarathri - [Siva](#) Pooja
5. Karthika - Karthika Deepa
6. Ayilya Pooja - Milk, flowers etc. offered to serpent God and special rites
7. Aiswarya Pooja - On all full moon (Pournami) days
8. Nirayum Puthariyum (Ramayana Parayanam) - During the month of [Karkadakam](#)
9. Akhandanama Japam - 4th Sunday of every month

Incarnation of Goddess

India has ever been the holy land of gods and goddesses. Since ages past, men and women kings and emperors, saints and sages here were worshipping the Lord not only as the omnipotent and absolute 'one' but also as the 'one' whose manifestations are varied and manifold and who possesses different names, forms and divine attributes. Thus Almighty the Eternal God was worshipped in different forms such as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, and their consorts; representing specific divine attributes of the Lord. Ancient puranas have described that Siva and Sakthi were simultaneously worshipped from the period of Aryans and Dravidians. Vishnumaya took the incarnation of Bhagavathy to annihilate evil and protect the good in this world. She grants every wish of Her devotees and resides in their hearts in multifarious forms.

Story of Kannaki

According to mythology, Attukal Bhagavathy is supposed to be the divinised form of "Kannaki", the famous heroine of Chilappatikaram, the sangham work of Tamil Literature written by ilamkovadikal. After the destruction of the ancient city of Madurai, Kannaki left that city and reached Kerala via Kanyakumari and on her way to Kodungalloor took a sojourn at Attukal. The hymns of the "Thottampattu) sung during the annual temple festival, are based on the story of Kannaki. Moreover, architectural depictions of Goddess Kannaki seen on the Gopuram temple substantiate this mythology. Small wonder then. that, Sri. Vidyadhiraja Chattampi Swamy, the well known saint of Kerala, found this temple premises ideal for his meditations. And there are so many stories which prove the greatness of the Goddess and which attract thousands of devotees to the temple.

Aesthetics of Architecture

Anyone visiting the Attukal temple is first struck by the beauty and charm of the temple architecture. The temple structure is a harmonious conglomeration of both Kerala and Tamil

styles of architecture. The beautifully carved figures of Mahishasuramardhini, Goddess Kali, Rajarajeswari, Sree Parvathy with Lord Paramasiva and various other depictions of the Goddess in and around the temple are undoubtedly the work of a gifted artist. Equally well presented around the corridors surrounding the temple, are the depiction of various other Gods and the epic stories of the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu viz., the "Desavathara". On either side of the elegant front gopura - are the icons based on the story of Goddess Kannaki. On the southern Gopura, the puranic story of "Dakshayaga" is depicted in sculptures. The decorated gate at the entrance of the temple is by itself an excellent example of architectural beauty.

There are two idols of the Goddess in the sanctum sanctorum. The original idol is preserved in all its pristine beauty covered in ornamental gold embedded with installed stones.

The second idol of the Goddess is installed besides the original one. Within the temple corridors are also installed carvings and sculptures of Lord Ganesan, the serpent God and Lord Shiva. At the centre of the Sanctum within the Sreekovil, at a consecrated spot is installed the idol of the Goddess Attukal Bhagavathy emanating light and lustre to all.