

Chottanikkara Bhagawathi

By

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This is the most famous temple of Kerala where mentally disturbed people, come in thousands and get cured. This temple is 8 KM away from Thripoonithura a suburb of Cochin.

There are two main temples here. One as soon as we enter is the temple of Rajarajeswari and the one behind it in a slightly lower elevation called Keezhekavu has Bhadra Kali consecrated there. The Rajarajeswari is worshipped as Goddess Saraswathi in the morning, worshipped as Bhadra kali in the noon and Durga in the night. This temple opens every day at 4 AM. People believe that Goddess Mookambika of Kollur attends the first worship here before going to her temple. Another peculiarity of this temple is that the Goddess is not fixed to the ground but rests on sand. Nearby her is the statue of Lord Vishnu. So the devotees always pray her together with her brother Lord Narayana and say Amme Narayana.

It seems once the place this temple is located was a dense forest. There lived a tribal man called Kannappan, whose wife had died. Kannappan was a great devotee of Goddess Parvathy. He used to daily sacrifice an animal to his favourite Goddess. He had a cute daughter who was very fond of her pet, which was a cow. Since her father used to sacrifice cows, she kept her pet cow very near her and looked after her well. One day Kannappan could not get any animal to sacrifice to her Goddess. So he ordered his daughter to give her pet cow, for that days sacrifice. His daughter requested Kannappan to sacrifice her instead. The heart of Kannappan changed and he realized that he was doing a wrong thing by practicing animal sacrifice. He and the pet cow stayed near the temples Bali stone the entire night. In the morning, the cow herself had turned in to a stone. That place is called Pavazha malli thara (Place of the coral jasmine flower). People believe that pet cow of daughter of Kannappan was indeed Goddess Mahalakshmi. That day Lord Vishnu appeared before Kannappan and pardoned his sins and decided to be present in the temple along with the Goddess. That is how the concept of Lakshmi Narayana came in to this temple. The place where Kannappan used to sacrifice his cows is the location of the Keezhe kavil Bhagawathi.

It seems this temple location was rediscovered accidentally by a low caste grass cutter, who found that blood was flowing out of a stone which she accidentally cut. That day the Brahmin of the Yedattu house came along with the puffed rice in a coconut shell and this was offered to the Goddess for the first time. Even today this system of offering puffed rice in a coconut shell continues. The Brahmins of Yedattu house became priests at this temple. It was Adhi Shankara who visited the temple, who brought in to the Statue the presence of Mookambika. It seems when Vilwamangalam Swamiyar visited this temple he saw a powerful halo of light over the temple pond. He instituted a search and the present statue of Keezhe kavu was found in the tank. There is also a story of certain Gupthan Namboodiri who was pursued by a Yakshi. It seems the Yakshi took a form of a pretty maiden and tried to entice the Namboodiri. Since Namboodiri was carrying a Devi Mahatmyam book, she was not able to do anything. But being attracted by her Gupthan

Namboodiri wanted to leave the book, with his magician friend Kosapilli Namboodiri. The magician found out that the lady was a Yakshi. He gave Gupthan Namboodiri an enchanted towel. With the enchanted towel Gupthan ran up to the Chottanikkara temple. There he threw the towel outside and jumped in to the temple. The Yakshi who was pursuing him could catch hold of his feet. When Gupthan cried for help from the mother, she came out and cut the Yakshi in to pieces and threw her in to the temple tank. That tank is known today as Yakshikkulam or Raktakulam. It is to Keezhe Kavu Bhagawathi that the mentally disturbed people turn to for a cure. They are brought tied to the temple. As soon as they see the goddess, especially during the Guruthi (anointing with red saffron liquid), they start jumping uncontrollably. At night after 8.30 Pm, there is a valiya Guruthi in which Guruthi from 12 huge vessels is poured over the Goddess. It seems if the mentally disturbed people see this Guruthi daily, the spirit which is affecting them will run away. There is also a pala tree, in which these people drive huge nails by knocking the nails with their foreheads. People who are having a weak mind and are easily scared are requested not to go to the Keezhekkavu temple. There are also temples of Lord Shiva, Ganapathi and Nagar in this temple.

The major festival of this temple is in the month of Kumbham (February –march). The goddess comes out of the temple blesses all and after ritual bath (aarattu) goes back to the temple.

In the same month on the Makha star day between 2 :Pm to 5 Pm, there is a observance of Makham thozhal People believe that if unmarried people do that , they will get married and if married people do that the understanding between husband and wife would increase.