

Vadakkunathan Temple, Trichur

By

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Vadakkunathan temple also known as Then Kailasam (Kailasam of the South) and Vrishabhachalam occupies the pride of place on a hill top in the center of Trichur town of Kerala. The Malayalam name for Trichur is Trisiva Perur (The big town of holy Shiva).

People believe that this is one of the first consecrations done by Sage Parasurama after he recovered the present land of Kerala from the sea. It seems he requested Lord Shiva to show him the proper spot to build a temple. Lord Shiva then sent his steed Nandi and Simhodara to choose a proper place for the temple. They chose the present place and Lord Parasurama consecrated the present temple here for Lord Shiva. It seems he also consecrated the statues of Lord Rama and Lord Shankaranarayana in this temple. Besides these three Gods, the temple also has Lord Ganapathy, and Goddess Parvathy.

In the Shankara Vijaya , it is mentioned that Adhi Shankara's parents came to this temple and did Bhajanam(prayer) for a son. Lord Shiva blessed them with Adhi Shankara. Some people also believe that except for the Lord Shiva in this temple all other Gods were consecrated by sage Adhi Shankara when he visited this place. There is also a belief that Adhi Shankara wrote his magnum opus "Soundarya Lahari" extolling the virtues of Goddess Paravathi in this temple.

There are many interesting stories about this great temple. Some of them are:-

1. When Poonthanam Namboodiri did pooja in this temple., Lord Shiva appeared before him as Lord Vishnu and told the assembled people about the oneness of the Gods.
2. When Adhi Shankara came here he first did Pooja to Lord Shiva. But he was not able to walk to the temple of Pravathy which is behind this temple. At that time a baby girl came and offered him a cup of milk. But Adhi Shankara could not lift his hands to receive the milk. He told the baby, "I do not have Shakthi (strength) to receive this cup from you." Then the girl told him, "That is because you seem to have forgotten about Shakthi." It seems then he realized his mistake and started composing prayers in praise of the Goddess. Soundarya Lahari is among the first and it was composed here.
3. Once a handsome saint used to daily sing the praise of the Lord. All the women devotees used to watch him with great devotion. But it seems , all the children born after that had the features of the handsome saint. People started getting perturbed. Then Lord Shiva sent his white bull to this temple. Then people saw that all the Calves born after that were white. Then they realized their mistake and requested pardon of the great saint.. The statue of this white bull is still in this temple.
4. The statute of Vadakkunathan is that of the hunter who gave Pasupathasthra to Arjuna. In the altercation, Arjuna hit the Lord with his bow. This caused a wound. When the doctors were consulted, they told that pouring of Ghee over the wound will cure it. Because of this the main worship of the Shiva temple is Abhisheka (Anointment) with ghee. Since this has been going on for ages, we will not be able to

see the God but only a mountain of ghee. It is a wonder of wonders that this ghee never gets spoiled and never melts. Once in a while a small portion of the ghee falls from this mountain of ghee. This is given to the devotees and it is believed that it has lot of curative properties.

5. There is big ground of 18 acres surrounding the temple. This was once upon a time a teak wood forest (Even today it is called Thekkin Kadu (teak wood forest) , one great king of Cochin who was interested in the development of Trichur town ordered the clearing of the forest. Then the soothsayer of Parmekkavu temple told him that the teak wood trees are the hairs of the goddess and should not be cut. But Shakthan Thamburan first cut off the head of the soothsayer and later cleared the forest.

Another strange fact about the temple is that though Tippu Sultan marched through Trichur he did not cause any harm o the temple.

There are no festivals in this temple except the observation of Shiva Rathri. But several temples in the neighbour hood viz Thiruvambadi, Chembukkavu, Paramekkavu, Naithalakkavu, Panekkam palli, Karamukku , Ayyanthol, Lalooru, Kanimangalamand Panekkampalli come to see Lord Shiva on the Trichur Pooram day along with their elephants. Thirty elephants assemble in the courtyard,. Those night huge quantities of crackers are burst . This festival is one of the greatest festivals in Kerala.

In this temple there is a very elaborate routine for a visit. As given in the prayer “Vadakkunathande Darshana Kramam.”

First we have to take bath in the tank which is to the west of the temple .Then we have to Go round the banyan tree seven times. And enter the temple through the main gate. In the left there is the pit made by Arjuna’s bow. We have to wash our legs there and visit the Lord Krishna’s temple. Then we have to salute the statue of Nandi followed by saluting Lord Parsurama’s statue. There we have also salute the Simhodharan who was one of the co founders of the temple. Later we have to walk towards north and salute Lord Viswanatha of Benares.. Then we have to walk towards south east and climbing the stone salute Lord Ramanatha of Rameshwaram and Lord Nataraja of Chidambaram. Then we have to move south and salute the Bhagawathi of Kodungallore, and later the Bhagawathy of Oorakam and then later Lord Bharath of Irinjalakkuda. Then we have to meditate on Veda Vyasa and write the 51 alphabets on the stone of Vyasa. Then we have to salute Lord Ayyappa and walk towards north. There we have to pluck a flower , wear it and after saluting the conch and the holy wheel enter the temple of Lord Shankara Narayana. And offer salutations to the picture on the left , offer prayers to Bhoomiswara and then enter the temple of Lord Shiva.

There we have to salute the learned people sitting in the Mandap and salute the dance of Chandika on the left side.

Then with all devotion salute the Vadakkunathan. Go to the right and again salute the Lord..Then in order salute Bhagawathy, Ganapathi, and the God in the centre in the south, then Ganapathi, then Bhagawathi and then again Vadakkunathan.