

## Puthucode Bhagwathi Temple

By

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Puthucode is a picturesque small village lying on the western most border of Palghat District and bordering Thrissur District. It is approximately 40kms away from both Palghat and Thrissur towns. The nearest railway stations are Palghat and Thrissur. The nearest airports are Coimbatore and Kochi. The village is located 6 km west of Vadakkencherry on the Palakkad-Thrissur stretch of the National Highway 47. There are regular bus services from Thrissur and Palghat to Puthucode.

Puthucode *agraharam* with four streets with row houses was exclusively inhabited by Brahmins until a few decades back. Where the four streets meet is the famous Annapoorneswari temple. It would be apt to say the 4 *agraharams* are radiating from the central Annapoorneswari temple.

It is said that Sage Parasurama installed 108 Durga temples in many parts of India and this is one of them. Currently this comes under Naduvil Madom Devaswam. The daily *poojas* are performed by Tamil Brahmins except during the *Navarathri* festival when they are performed by *Thantris* affiliated to Naduvil Madom Devaswam.

There is a belief among Brahmins of this village that this idol (4 feet tall) was got made in Truthala near Kuttanad and was brought by Brahmins of the village belonging to three Vedas by head load, with chanting the Vedas all the way without stopping any where on the way. It is believed at some stage in the life of the temple , the Tamil Brahmins gave the temple to the Naduvil Madam. According to a satone inscription, Sri Godavarma Raja gifted lots of rice fields for the maintenance of the temple. These properties were abolished due to the Land reform act of Kerala. But the Tamil Brahmins of the village joined together and formed an organization of a trust called SAPCO (Sree Annapuneshwari Pooja

Coordinators trust ) which is managing the temple at present. Though the Goddess is called Annapurneshwari , she holds in her hands Shanku and Chakra (Not ladle and vessel like the Annapurneshwari of Benares) .

The temple occupies a vast area with a large outer *Prakaaram* and an inner *Prakaaram*. The main entrance to the temple faces east and as you enter the temple there is a *Deepasthambham* beyond which is the entrance to the inner *Prakaaram* of the temple. The inner *Prakaaram* is also very large with wide corridors known as *Vathil maadams* along the four sides, where discourses and concerts used to take place. The *madapalli* or the cook house is also situated here. As you go inside is the *Mahaganapathy Sannidhi* facing east. Going around the *Mahaganapathy Sannidhi* you reach the main temple of Annapoorneswari. The Deity faces west. The Deity is also known as Santha Durga and is a very powerful *Devi* bestowing Her benevolent blessings to all Her devotees. The four handed idol of *Devi* is almost 4 feet tall. She is always dressed in a *Pattu Pavadai*. To see the *Devi* in her full *Chandana kappu* after the *Deeparadhana* in the evening is at once electrifying. It gives one such a joy and peace and real happiness. One just cannot take the eyes off *Devi* when She is adorned in full *Chandana kappu*.

In front of the *Garba Griham* or Sanctum is the *Namaskara Mandapam*, where *Veda Parayanams* and other daily recitals of *Devi Mahatmyam* and *Shyamala Dandakam* are done by devotees.

When you come around the *Namaskara Mandapam*, there is the *Prathishta* for *Naga devata*, *Dharmasastha* and *Palliyarkkal Bhagavathy* on the north-west corner of the main temple. A unique offering (vazhipadu) of *Azhil* is conducted in front of this *Sannidhi*. A new cloth (a set of 4 *thorthus*) dipped in Gingelly oil is hung on the poll in between two stone pillars. After doing a special *pooja* the *archaka* lights the cloth dipped in oil and allows it to burn down to ashes. This ash is used as *prasadam* and smeared on the forehead. It is believed that this offering will relieve one of all types of obstacles and misfortunes in life.

The other important offerings (*vazhipadu*) in the temple are *Kalabhabhishekam*, *Niramala*, *Chuttuvilakku*, *Archanas*, etc.

On the outer *prakaaram*, is the west *nada*, which is also known as *Aanapandhi* which has the gold plated *dwajasthambam*. This is where the *Thayambaka* and *Keli* take place during *Navarathri* celebrations.

Along the northern compound wall of the temple is the *Agrisala*, where cooking and dining take place during the *Annadhanam* of *Navarathri*.

The *Sarat Navarathri* during the months of September and October is the biggest festival in Puthucode Bhagavathy temple. All Her subjects who are far from home assemble at Puthucode during these nine days. The *Dwajaroohanam* for the festival is on the *Prathama thithi* after *Mahalaya Amavasya* and the *Aarattu* on *Vijayadashami* day or the 10<sup>th</sup> day from the *Dwajaroohanam*. There are daily processions with caparisoned elephants twice a day for the first 4 days inside the temple on the outer *Praakaram* and on the following 4 days the procession of caparisoned elephants with accompanying *Panchavadyam* and *Chendamelam* is taken to the 4 villages on successive days, starting with the South village on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. The *Utsavamoorthy* of the deity is taken atop the caparisoned elephant to all the villages for Her to see Her subjects. There is a *Pallivetta* on the 9<sup>th</sup> night followed by *Aarattu* on the 10<sup>th</sup> day. During *Navarathri* the *Utsavamoorthy* is taken atop the elephant to the nearby stream every morning where the deity is given bath and after due *alankarams* taken back to the temple.

Measures of paddy and rice and other things like puffed rice, flowers, etc known as *Parayeduppu* are offered to Bhagavathy during the procession of elephants to the respective villages. The *Parayeduppu* for the south village is on the *Aarattu* day when the deity returns to the temple after her holy bath in the stream.

After *Aarattu* the elephant has to touch the *Dwajasthambham* which will mark the end of the festival for that year.

In 2003, devotees installed a new *Dwajasthambham* covered with full gold.

True to Her name there is *Annadhanam* on all the 9 days of *Navarathri* for all devotees. Puthucode *Pulinkari* which is served with Rice and Olan is unique to this *Navarathri Sadhya*. The *Sadasadaya Payasam (Idichujpizhinja payasam)* offered to *Bhagavathy* during these days is also very famous. There is a saying in tamil *Puthucoda vitta gramamum illai, Pulinkariye vitta kootanum illai* which can be translated as, Puthucode is the ultimate among *agraharams* and *Pulinkari* is the ultimate in curries.

Several families had bequeathed land to the Devaswom in the olden days for the *Annadhanam* during *Navarathri*. However with the enactment of land reform bills in the early 70s the annuities to the temple became so meager that for sometime there were not enough funds even to conduct the daily *poojas* of the temple. With the cooperation and effort of the villagers a trust by name SAPCO (Sri Annapoorneswari Pooja Coordinators) , the *poojas* and other daily rituals have been reinstated with increased vigor. The Devi has blessed all Her children with wealth, health and positions and they in turn pay their respects to Her by donating to the temple funds.

The temple is open from 5.30am to 10.00am and 4.30pm to 9.00pm for worship. The *Deeparadhana* in the evening is at 6.30pm.

At the end of North Village is a Siva temple. The temple is situated at a lower level than the surrounding village. There is a large tank known as *ayyankulam* in front of the Siva temple. The presiding deity is facing east. There are also *sannidhis* for *Mahaganapathy* and *Dharmasastha* inside the temple. The annual festival in this Siva temple starts on the *Thiruvathira* day of the Malayalam month *Dhanu* and the *Arattu* is on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. *Mahasivarathri* is also celebrated in a grand manner with *Maharudram, Abhishekam* etc. *Annabhishekam* on the *Pournami* day of the Malayalam month *Thulam* is also very famous.

The temple opens for worship at 5.30am to 10.30 am and again at 4.30pm to 9.00pm.

Just outside the Siva temple there is a newly constructed Sivamahal in the north village, which can be used for functions like Marriage, *Upanayanam* etc.