

History of Vadakumnathan Temple

Project submitted to the University of Calicut

in partial fulfilment for the award of the degree

of

Bachelor of Arts in English & History

By

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March 2021

Declaration

I, Niranjana P.R , hereby declare that the **History of Vadakumnathan Temple**, submitted to the University of Calicut in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the **Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English & History**, is a bonafied record of original research work carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. George Alex, Coordinator, Department of B.A. English & History (Double Main) Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the project entitled **History of Vadakumnathan Temple** is a bonafied research work carried out by Ms. **Niranjana P.R** under my supervision and guidance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Bachelor of Arts in English & History** submitted to the University of Calicut.

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Acknowledgement

I owe my gratitude to God Almighty for the endless clemency and intervention on helping me to complete my project without any hassles. I am indebted to my Supervising teacher Sagive Varghese and Coordinator, Dr. George Alex, Department of English & History (Double Main), Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, for supervising me throughout the project and for the countless hours and effort he has put in to complete the project. I thank him for his timely help and generous encouragement. I am grateful to Dr. Jolly Andrews CMI, the Principal of Christ College (Autonomous), Irinjalakuda, for the congenial atmosphere of research fostered in the campus throughout my studies.

I owe my thanks to my parents, my teachers, my friends and all those who have helped me directly and indirectly, in the successful completion of this project work.

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Introduction

Thrissur district in Kerala is known for its rich culture and heritage. Being the place that hosts Thrissur Pooram, the festival of festivals, Thrissur also has many other reasons to be proud of. Several unique attractions like Vadakkunnathan Temple, PunnathurKotta (Palace of elephants) and Kalamandalam make the district one of the culturally strong places in Kerala.

The Vadakkunnathan temple is the first temple which was created by Lord Parasurama. The temple located at the heart of the city of Thrissur is enclosed by colossal walls of stone under an area of around eight acres. The four directions, East, West, North and South in the temple have been indicated by four Gopurams inside the temple premises. In the centre of the temple there is multi shrined complex, besides the four Gopurams. The three key shrines of the temple have been dedicated to the Vadakkunnathan or Lord Shiva, Lord Rama and Sankaranarayana. Lord Shiva who in the hunter form called as the Vettekkaran, besides other places is also worshipped in the Nalambalam area.

As per the archaeological findings, Vadakkunnathan temple is one of the oldest temples of the Southern India and is the largest temple of the Kerala which is dedicated to worshipping Lord Shiva. This religious place is an extraordinary example of the classical Kerala style of architecture featuring outstanding murals of the 17th century echoing the story of Mahabharata. The wood carved vignettes are displayed in the Koothambalam and shrines. One interesting thing about the temple is that it is believed to be the place where Tipu Sultan camped, though this fact has been associated with many disputes and many historians have not supported the idea.

The deity Adi Sankara is considered to have been born to the couple Aryamba and Shiva guru after long years of prayer to Vadakkunnathan. He was born as an incarnation of Lord a8s Kalady. It is said that Lord Shiva came in the dream of both the husband wife asking them for a choice for a son to be born to them. He gave them a choice to choose among a son who will do average in life but will live a longer life or a son who will be extraordinarily brilliant but will have a shorter life. And, after deliberating on the same for many days the couple chose the one with an extraordinary brilliance but having shorter life span. To show their gratitude to Lord Shiva, they named their son Sankara.

For the temple there is no annual festival and the important ceremony being Shivaratri for the temple and the idol of the Lord is not taken out for procession. In vrischikam or in the month of November or December, puja in the morning is performed at the Southern compound of the temple. People believe that on this day, looking out towards the South to see his wife, after taking Thrikkartika bath in the Meenachil River, returning procession. It is believe that Vilwamangalam Swamiyar once, gave visit to the temple on the Thrikarthika day in the morning and he realized that Lord Vadakkunnathan is not present inside the Sreekovil. And thus, he finally found the Lord on the wall of the compound. And thus the Puja at the wall of the Southern compound was started by Vilwamangalam.

Thrissur Pooram is believed to be the most vibrant temple festivals of Kerala which it's magnificence attract a large number of devotees from across the country and also outside the country. The festival sees spectacular view of the elephants from various neighbouring temples at the Vadakkunnathan temple. This festival which is around two century years old gets a spectacular view of the adorned elephants with enthralling

performances. This is a marathon of 36 hours consisting of beautifully organized events starting at 6 AM in the morning and lasting till noon on the other day. People on this festival participate irrespective of the caste and religion to which they belong, unlike the other festivals of the temple.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

There is no authentic work about the history of Vadakkunnathan temple. And the available sources about temple are some magazines and some other newspaper reports.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To understand about the history of Temple

To understand the heritage of Temple

SOURCES

The primary and secondary sources are used to complete this study. The literature reviews are the main evidence of this study. And other than literature reviews, the various newspaper reports such as reports from The Hindu are also used for this study. And the information's are also collected from various websites

METHODOLOGY

Historical methodology is used in this study. This work is based on primary sources and secondary sources. The methodology and technique used in this study is local history.

CHAPTERISATION

The project is presented in five chapters, introduction followed by first chapter and it will introduce the history and structure of Vadakkunnathan temple. The second chapter will explain the Art and architecture of temple. The third chapter discuss about the legend behind the Vadakkunnathan temple, followed by conclusion.

CHAPTER 1

History and Structure of Vadakkunnathan Temple

Vadakkunnathan Temple is an ancient Hindu temple dedicated to Shiva at city of Thrissur, of Kerala state in India. This temple is a classic example of the architectural style of Kerala and has monumental towers on all four sides and also a kuttambalam. Mural paintings depicting various episodes from Mahabharata can be seen inside the temple. The shrines and the Kuttambalam display vignettes carved in wood. The temple, along with the mural paintings, has been declared as a National Monument by India under the AMASR Act. According to popular local lore, this is the first temple built by Parasurama, the sixth avatar of Vishnu. Thekkinkadu maidan, encircling the Vadakkunnathan Temple, is the main venue of the Thrissur Pooram. Non-Hindus are not allowed to enter into the temple. In the year 2012 the Archaeological survey of India (ASI) has recommended 14 sites, including Vadakkunnathan temple and palaces, from Kerala to include in the list of UNESCO world heritage site. The story of the Vadakkunnathan temple is briefly narrated by BrahmandaPurana and there is reference to it in some other works also. Through there difference between these accounts on the details, all agree on the central facts, namely that the temple

The story of the origin of the Vadakkunnathan Temple is briefly narrated in BrahmandaPurana and there are references to it in some other works also. Though there are differences between these accounts on the details, all agree on the central fact, namely, that the temple was founded by Parashurama. Parashurama exterminated

Kshatriyas twenty one times. In order to cleanse himself and balance his karma he performed a yajna at the end of which he gave away all the land to Brahmins as dakshina. He wanted to retire to some new land to perform tapasya and so he requested the Lord of the seas and oceans Varuna to throw up a new piece of land from the sea.

According to another version, some sages approached him at the end of the yajna and requested him to give them some secluded land. Parashurama then made the request to Varuna for their sake. Varuna gave him a winnow (surpa) and asked him to hurl it into the sea, as he did a large territory of land was at once thrown up by the sea; this territory that rose out of the sea was Kerala. It was then known by the name “Surparaka”, from the word, “Surpa” meaning winnow.

According to some other accounts, Varuna asked Parashurama to hurl his axe into the sea. Parashurama now wanted to consecrate this new land. So he went to Mount Kailash to his guru, Lord Shiva and requested him to take abode in Kerala and thereby bless the region. Shri Shiva accompanied by his wife Parvati, his sons Ganesha and Subrahmanya and his parashadas went along with Parashurama, to satisfy the desire of his disciple. Shiva stopped at a spot, now Thrissur, for his seat and later he and his party disappeared and Parashurama saw a bright and radiant Shiva linga (aniconic symbol of Shiva) at the foot of a huge banyan tree. This place where Shiva first manifested his presence through the linga is in Samskrth (Sanskrit) known as the Sri Moola Sthana.

For some time, the linga remained at Sri Mula Sthana at the foot of a huge banyan tree. The ruler of Cochin Kingdom then decided to shift the linga to a more convenient place and enclose it in a temple. Arrangements were soon made to reinstall the deity in the new

place. But there was an initial difficulty. The linga could not be removed without cutting off a large part of the banyan tree. While cutting the branches of the tree, there was the danger of a piece of it falling on the idol and damaging it. When the ruler and the others did not know what to do, the Yogatirippadu came forward with a solution. He lay over the deity so as to cover it completely and asked the men to cut the tree. The cutting began and to the wonder of all not a piece of the tree fell anywhere near the deity. The deity was moved with all due rituals and installed in the new place where it has remained till now. Then a temple was built according to the rules laid down in the Shastras.

According to Malayalam historian VVK Valath, the temple was a pre-Dravidian Kavu (shrine). Later, the temple was influenced by Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism. In the early days, Paramakkavu Bhagavathi was also inside the Vadakkunnathan temple. But Koodalmanikyam Temple, Kodungallur Bhagavathi Temple and Ammathiruvadi Temple, Urakam is older than Vadakkunnathan temple, according to temple documents. It also had influences from Buddhist temples and Jain temples. Maha Shivaratri is the main festival which is celebrated in the temple. Cultural and musical programmes are held in the temple premises. Around one lakh temple lamps (hundred thousand) are lighted in the festival. The idol of Vadakkunnathan is not taken out for procession.

Yogiatirippads

The Namboodiries who were entrusted with looking after temple affairs were called Yogiatirippads. When Namboodiries gained control of the region, the temple also came under

their domain. The Yogiatrippads were elected from Thrissur desam. Prior to Sakthan Thampuran's reign, the Yogiatrippad system declined. Later, the Maharaja of Cochin gained presiding authority over the temple.

Adi Shankara

Adi Shankara is believed to have been born (788 AD) to Shiva guru and Aryamba of Kalady consequent to their prayers to lord Vadakkunnathan, as *amsavata* of Shiva. The couple devoutly prayed for 41 days at the temple. Legend has it that Shiva appeared to the couple in their dreams and offered them a choice. They could have either a mediocre son who would live a long life or an extraordinary son who would die early. Both Shiva guru and Aryamba chose the latter. In honour of Shiva, they named their son Shankara. According to legend, Adi Shankara attained *videha mukti* ("freedom from embodiment") at the Vadakkunnathan temple. One narrative as expounded by the *Keraliya Shankaravijaya*, identifies the temple as his place of death. He also established four Mutts at Thrissur, famously known as Edayil Madhom, Naduvil Madhom, and Vadakke Madhom.

Invasion of Tipu Sultan

During the invasion of Tipu Sultan, the temple was not attacked by Tipu's Army. Even though Tipu Sultan destroyed many temples in Thrissur district at that time, he never touched Vadakkunnathan Temple. According to historical accounts, when Sultan was marching towards the Travancore lines, known locally as Nedumkotta, he had a short stay at Thrissur city from 14 to 29 December 1789. In order to feed his Army, he had

borrowed cooking vessels from Vadukanthan Temple. Before leaving Thrissur city, he not only returned the vessels, but presented the temple with a large bronze lamp.

Zamorin of Calicut

During 1750 to 1762, the temple affairs were conducted by Zamorin of Calicut who attacked Thrissur city and took control of the temple and the city. In 1762 with the help of Kingdom of Travancore, Maharaja of Cochin regained control over Thrissur city and the temple.

Sakthan Thampuran

When Sakthan Thampuran (1751–1805), ascended the throne of Kingdom of Cochin, he changed the capital of Kingdom of Cochin from Thripunithura to Thrissur city as the King had a personal relationship with Vadakkunnathan Temple. He later cleared the teak forest around the temple and introduced the famous Thrissur Pooram festival. The King's personal interest in the temple also changed the fortune of the city.

Structure

The temple is situated on an elevated hillock in the centre of Thrissur City and is surrounded by a massive stone wall enclosing an area of nearly 9 acres (36,000 m²). Inside this fortification, there are four gopurams facing four cardinal directions. Between the inner temple and the outer walls, there is a spacious compound, the entrance to which is through gopurams. Of these, the gopurams on the south and north are not open to the public. The public enter either through the east or west gopuram. The inner temple is separated from the outer temple by a broad circular granite wall enclosing a broad corridor called *Chuttambalam*. Entrance into the inner temple is through a passage through the corridor.

Towards the Northern side of the temple a circular structure featuring the idol of the deity is located with the deity facing towards the West. There is also the idol of Lord Shiva and Parvati which faces the East and is located right behind the Shiva idol in the same shrine. In the Southern side there is the double storied Shri Rama's shrine and it faces west. Also a third one in between these two Srikovils, the third one, all in circular shape and featuring double storey, is dedicated to worshipping Sankaranarayana and facing the western direction. Apart from that, in front of these three shrines located in the centre, stands Mukhamandapams. The temple's majesty is celebrated at such a large scale for it featuring Vrishabha, Simhodara, Lord Krishna, Adi Shankaracharya and Dharmasastha.

CHAPTER 2

Art and Architecture of Vadakunnathan Temple

Kerala temple architecture Temple architecture in Kerala is different from that of other regions in India. The roofs are steep and pointed, and covered with copper sheets. The shape of the roof is in circular plan; one sees a conical roof, while with a square plan the roof is pyramidal. The roof is constructed with wood and is covered with copper plates. The Keralite temple is an amalgam of stonework, wood work, stucco work and painting - harmoniously blended into a structure vibrant with traditions of the region. The wood work here is of great importance. The Kerala temple walls are of coursed laterite stone masonry plastered in mud and lime. Murals are seen on several of these temple walls.

An architectural marvel in wood and stone, the Vadakkunnathan Temple, one of the oldest in the state. Vadakkunnathan Shiva Temple in Thrissur, a classic example of the Kerala style of architecture. The temple is situated in an elevated hillock in the centre of Thrissur City. Surrounded by an Enormous stone wall enclosing an area of about 9 acres. There are four Gopurams inside this fortification, each facing north, south, east and west directions. Dedicated to Lord Shiva as Vadakkunnathan Temple

Temple has all the features attributable to a temple which has all the elements of the panchaprakara scheme. In the Vadakkunnathan complex the three independent srikovils in the North-south axis, are being dedicated respectively to Siva, Sankaranarayana and Rama. These are enclosed by a common enclosure (Nalambalam).

⊖ The circular srikovil of Siva, northern most of the row has its garbhagriha divided by a transverse diagonal wall. ⊖ The western half dedicated to Siva has its own door opening and flight of steps in front with a detached namaskara mandapam. ⊖ The eastern half is dedicated to Parvathi, with the door opening on the east. The northern and southern cardinal points have ghanadwaras.

Display of rows of brass oil lamps around the outer walls of the shrines. The architectural plan of these shrines is peculiar, with the 'Vritta' plan and conical brass plated superstructure over it. The conical roof is distinct architectural idiom necessitated by the heavy rainfall in the west coast. The tall and spacious Kootambulam (Temple theatre) is an impressive structure, containing exquisite vignettes of wood carving and interesting bracket figures. Kootambulam Used for staging Koothu, NangyarKoothu and Koodiyattam, an ancient ritualistic art forms of Central Kerala Kootambulam (Dance hall)

An architectural marvel in wood and stone, the Vadakkunnathan Temple, one of the oldest in the state, stands tall right at the heart of Thrissur, in a nine-acre walled patch of green. This centuries-old temple which is a classic example of Kerala's rich cultural heritage has sent flutters in the international circuit by clinching the 'Award of Excellence' last year at the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation for taking great strides in protecting its legacy in architecture. And now it stands tall, restored to its old glory.

It was no easy feat for the team of archaeologists, craftsmen and others who toiled to restore the temple to its original state, an effort that spanned more than 10 years. The work was carried out under the guidance and control of Archaeological

Survey of India (ASI). Every effort was taken to keep the original structure intact and renovate in the traditional way. Restoration of the stunning centuries-old murals, intricately carved wooden sculptures, and exquisite wood work were done keeping in line with rituals and using only organic matter. The restoration process used the same methods and techniques that were used for the original construction.

A walk through the serene surrounds of the temple will treat you to a heady mix of architectural beauty, heritage, culture and history. The temple is also renowned across the world for its *Pooram* Festival. Lakhs of devotees and tourists gather every year to witness the famous "Thrissur Pooram" at the temple premises where ceremoniously decorated elephants are paraded amidst much fanfare and which also involves a spectacular display of fireworks.

The idol was said to be at the base of the Moolasthanam for many years. Later the rulers of the Kingdom of Cochin decided to build a temple and place the idol inside it. The temple is situated on a small hillock at the centre of a circular maidan. Locally called as Tekkinadu (teak forest), overlooking the city. Spread across 9 acres, enclosed by a huge stone wall with four magnificent Gopurams in the four cardinal directions i.e. east, west, north, and south. The main entrance for devotees is through the east and west Gopuram. Whereas north and south, Gopuram remain closed. The south Gopuram is opened only during Thrissur Pooram, an important festival celebrated in the month of April.

Gopuram

The Gopurams are multi-storeyed structures made with granite and tiled roof. This structure of the temple is a typical temple structure that is followed in Kerala, with woods and tiled roof like a pagoda. The main shrine is centred inside a multi-shrined courtyard. Along with shrines dedicated to Parvathi, Shankarnarayan, Sri Rama, and Ganesh, which is surrounded by a wall smaller than the outer wall? The inner temple complex can be reached from the outer complex through a corridor called “Chuttambalam”. As one crosses the corridor, there is a mural painting of Vasukishayanam (Shiva sleeping on serpent king Vasuki, similar to Vishnu’s Anantshayanam) on the northern wall. It is behind the Nandi and Nrithanath, the painting of dancing Shiva with 16 hands. These two paintings are also worshipped along with the deities.

Linga

The shrine of Shri Vadakkunnathan is circular in shape with one roof and pillars. The Linga of Vadakkunnathan is not visible as it is covered with mounds of ghee due to regular Abhishek conducted over so many years. It is said that the ghee never melts. Neither in the summer season nor due to the warmth of the Diyas lighted inside the sanctum sanctorum. There is no foul smell either inside the temple due to the presence of so much old ghee.

The Linga is embellished with thirteen crescents of gold. It has three serpent hoods on top. The deity of Parvathi is in the same shrine at the back of the temple. Both

the deities do not face each other. Since this image is made of wood, Abhishek is done only with turmeric. The Vighraha has three eyes and is decorated with ornaments and silk cloth.

Sri Ram Shrine

There is a two-storeyed Sri Ram shrine located inside the courtyard that faces west direction. The wall of the temple is decorated with beautiful mural paintings. Between these two shrines is located a circular shrine dedicated to Shri Shankarnarayan which faces the same direction as the other two shrines. The Vighraha of Shankarnarayan is a combination of both Shiva and Vishnu. It has four arms that carry a trident, a hatchet on the right side, and a conch shell, a Gada on the left side. The walls are covered with murals depicting the story of Mahabharata. The architecture of these three shrines is said to be of “Vritta” or a circular plan with a conical roof. There are three wooden Mukhamandap’s in front of these three shrines.

Mahaganapati Shrine

Between Vadakkunnathan and Shankarnarayan is the shrine dedicated to Mahaganapati facing the east direction. That is towards the temple kitchen, which is situated behind the Shankarnarayan shrine. The Vighraha is four-armed. Towards the northern side is another deity called Vettakkorumakan (Shiva in hunter form) which is supposed to be the guardian of the temple. Bali stone made of brass and stone images of prostrating men can be seen everywhere on the ground.

The temple compound between the outer wall and the inner wall houses a number of shrines. There are many peepal trees scattered inside the outer courtyard. The compound has a Pradakshina path. There is a particular laid down process to be followed while doing the Pradakshina around the temple.

Shrines and structures in the outer compound

The different shrines and structures present in the outer compound are:

Koothambalam or Natyagriha

It is a huge wooden structure where the ancient dance and art forms of Kerala like Koothu, Koodiyattam, and NangyarKoothu are performed annually.

Gopalkrishna or Gosalkrishna

Dedicated to Krishna as a cowherd. It is said that there used to be a Goshala too.

Shara Teertham

There is a deep well on the northern side. A legend says that after killing Jayadratha in the Mahabharata war, Arjun came here for penance. He created the well by shooting an arrow and filled it with water from River Ganga.

Vrishabh or Nandikeshwar

This temple is dedicated to Nandi, the Vahan of Shiva. It is situated on the North Westside. The deity is in a sleeping position. Hence it has to be woken first by clapping our hands. Devotees offer a thread from their dress as a practice.

Parashuram

On the northeast corner is a platform dedicated to Parashuram. It is said that he disappeared from this place after completing his duties. A Diya is lighted there.

Simhodara

He is one of the Gana of Shiva who was assigned the duty to find a suitable place for Shiva to reside after Parashuram requested him to reside in Kerala. Simhodara found a suitable place and was taking rest when Shiva came and kicked him out of the inner courtyard. Since then it is said that he is residing at this place. Devotees pick some small stones from the ground and place it on another stone locally called Balikallu, on the northern side of this temple. This stone is associated with the legend of an old and poor Brahmin visiting Kashi with the help of Simhodara. There is a small triangular hole on the inner wall through which devotees can see the temple of Vadakkunnathan.

Shastha Temple

On the southeast corner, a small shrine has been constructed for Shastha or Shri Ayappa. Behind the temple, there is a place full of grass. It is believed that some parts of

the soil from the Sanjeevani mountain fell down here while Hanuman was carrying it to Lanka.

Vyasa Shila

Under a peepal tree is a platform with the shrine of Vyasa Rishi, the creator of Mahabharata. Devotees write “Om Shri Mahaganapataye Namah” on the platform with their finger as a pen.

Adi Shankaracharya

There is a shrine dedicated to Adi Shankaracharya, who had spent some days here. There is a legend about his birth associated with this temple.

Sambuthara

There is a platform on the southeast corner from where one can worship Shri Chidambaram while facing east and Shri Rameshwaram facing south. It is said that the “Nataraja” dance of Shiva in the Chidambaram Temple gets reflected in Rameshwaram too. It is said to have been viewed by Anantha, the 1000 hooded serpent from this point.

Ammathara

From this platform, one prays to “Oorakathamma”. Said to be another form of Kamakshi, settled in Oorkam, 10 KM’s from the temple. Shri Koodalmanikyaswamy (Bharata, brother of Shri Ram), whose Murthy is installed at Irinjalakuda, 20 km south of

the temple. It is believed that they both visit this platform to pray to the deities inside the temple.

Features that differentiate the Kerala temples are not only its simple, but elegant appearance, but also the construction materials that go into its building. The temple is made of a combination of stone, wood, stucco works and painting - put together in an exquisite manner that brings out the essence of colourful and active traditions of Kerala. The base and the structure above are made of granite and in some cases laterite stones respectively. The temple walls are made of coarse laterite stones plastered in mud and lime. Murals, using vegetable dyes, are seen on several of these temple walls. Careful use of enormous wood for the outer work and the inner skeletal work enhances the beauty and grandeur of the temple,

A distinctive feature that is not found in Hindu temples of other parts of India is the use of "vilakku maadam", or the multi-tiered brass lamps stand in the front part of temples on the outer wall right below the slanting roof. Laksha Deepam (100,000 lamps) is a grand and spectacular celebration of traditional lighting where tiers of small oil lamps lining the outer walls of the inner prakaram are lit. Karthikai Deepam festival in Kerala is celebrated on a grand scale and the Villakku madam is extensively used by the devotees.

Temples have an important place in the social life of Keralite because they form the divine confluence of simple expression of devotion and bakthi on one hand and on the other hand the same is conveyed through the expression of dance or Koothu in the house of God. The designs and styles of temple architecture evolved over a long period of time. Because of vast quantities of wood go into the construction, preservation of structures is very important. Temples were renovated frequently in the past and the current structures that we see today are vastly the result of the numerous renovations.

Chapter 3

Legend Behind Vadakkunnathan Temple

Kerala, the green paradise, is home to the ancient temples of Guruvayoor, Sabarimala & Vadakkunnathan. A visit to the Vadakkunnathan Temple is an integral part of the itinerary of dedicated Shiva devotees from all over the world!

An oasis of peace in the cultural capital of Kerala is the spacious Vadakkunnathan Temple which stands tall, right at the heart of Thrissur. Thrissur got its name from Thrissivaperoor, the abode of Lord Shiva. If you have the Vadakkunnathan temple on your [itinerary](#), feel free to read through to gain an insight into the temple.

It says Lord Parasurama who exterminated Kshatriyas for 21 times performed a Yajna to get relieved from the Sins and donated all his lands to Brahmans as a Dakshina. ... Lord Parasurama then requested his Guru Lord Shiva at Mount Kailash to descend to Kerala and make it his abode.

The origin of Vadakkunnathan Temple has mention in the BrahmandaPurana. It says Lord Parasurama who exterminated Kshatriyas for 21 times performed a Yajna to get relieved from the Sins and donated all his lands to Brahmans as a Dakshina. He then requested Lord Varuna (God of Rain) to throw a piece of Land from the sea to retire and continue with his penance. Lord Varuna presented him a winnow (Surpa), which turned into a territory.

Another version of the legend is that Varuna asked Parasurama to hurl the axe into the sea which turned into a territory. The land was then known as Surparaka originating from the word Surpa (winnow). Surparaka is the present day Kerala.

Lord Parasurama then requested his Guru Lord Shiva at Mount Kailash to descend to Kerala and make it his abode. Shiva with his consort Parvathi, Ganapathi, Subrahmanya and other Gana's followed him and disappeared after reaching Thrissur. Parasurama then saw the self-manifested Siva Linga under the huge Banyan Tree now known as Sri MulaSthana – The first place where Lord Siva manifested himself!

There is a brief reference to the temple and its origins in BrahmandaPurana and some other religious texts. According to these sources the temple was built by Parashurama (Rama with an axe). He was the son of sage Jamadagni and his pious wife Renuka. He was a Brahmin trained in warfare. Lord Shiva himself taught him for several years and gifted him various celestial weapons. He was the favourite disciple of Shiva.

Parashurama developed extreme hatred for the Kshatriyas (the warrior clan that occupies the position below Brahmins in the social hierarchy) when the mighty Kshatriyas king KartaveeryaArjuna killed his father. To avenge his father, Parashurama exterminated Kshatriyas twenty-one times. At the end of this exercise, he performed a Yagna (a kind of penance) to expiate his sins. He gave away all the land he acquired after killing the Kshatriyas to Brahmins. Now landless, Parashurama wanted to do tapasya (penance) and requested Varuna (the king of oceans) to throw up a piece of land from the sea. Varuna gave him an axe and asked him to hurl it into the sea. Parashurama did so and the sea water receded. The land thus emerged from the sea is Kerala.

Huge banyan tree inside Vadakkunnathan Temple, Thrissur, Kerala – The Shiva linga worshipped at this temple is believed to have emerged from the ground at the foot of a big banyan tree.

This land was not habitable. Parashurama wanted to consecrate it and make it habitable. So he went to Mount Kailash, the abode of Lord Shiva. Parashurama requested Shiva to accompany him to the land he reclaimed from the sea and reside there. Shiva agreed. He, his consort Parvathi and their sons Ganesha and Subrahmanya accompanied Parashurama to Kerala. When they reached Thrissur, Shiva stopped. He and his team suddenly disappeared, and a radiant Shiva Linga emerged from the ground at the foot of a huge banyan tree. This place where Shiva manifested his presence in the form of a linga is the MulaSthana (original place of worship) of this temple. The linga remained there for quite some time. Later the ruler of Kochi moved it to a more convenient place and built a temple to enclose it.

The Koothambalam (temple theatre) of this temple is believed to have been built by Perumthachan, the famed carpenter who lived in the 7th century. According to some historians this temple was a pre-Dravidian shrine. Over the course of centuries it came under the influence of various religions like Buddhism, Jainism and Vaishnavism. It is possible that at some point it was a Buddhist shrine. Currently it is a Shiva temple where most other Hindu deities are also worshipped. Vadakkunnathan Temple is unlikely to be the oldest temple in Thrissur. Some other temples in this district are older than this temple.

Conclusion

In this study that about the history of Vadakkunnathan temple .Vadakkunnathan Temple, or Vadakkunnathan Temple, in Thrissur is one of the most popular temples in Kerala. It is believed to be the first Shiva temple built by Lord Parasurama who is the sixth incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

The temple is known for the rare murals portrayed here that include scenes from Mahabharata, of which Vasukishayanam and Nrithanatha are worshipped daily. Apart from these murals, the temple also houses a museum that showcases ancient paintings, woodcarving and other works of art of ancient times.

In this study it helps to understand more details about Vadakkunnathan Temple.

Art and architecture of the temple. An architectural marvel in wood and stone, the Vadakkunnathan Temple, one of the oldest in the state, stands tall right at the heart of Thrissur, in a nine-acre walled patch of green.

In the study also analysed the legend behind the Vadakkunnathan Temple.

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