

KUNNATHUR PAADI
GOD'S OWN LAND
(Myth and history of Sree Muthappan)

Usha Namboothiripad

Publishers
KARAKKATTEDAM
ELLARENJI

Kunnathur Paadi: God's Own Land

(Myth and History of Sree Muthappan)

Folklore Studies

Usha Namboothiripad

Rights reserved with the author

First Edition: January, 1997

Second Edition: January 2001

Publishers

Karakkattedam,

Ellarenji,

Sreekandapuram,

Kannur District,

Kerala,

India, Pin

Cover Design Ellora, Calicut

Typeset by Rolex Graphics, Calicut

Printed at Kamala Printers, Calicut

Price Rs. 20.00

PREFACE

Divine ordinances can never be disobeyed, that is what we have been taught from our ancestors. Mostly such orders are hard tasks and seem to be impossible. But when one is ordained, even the most laborious task. seems to be easy. This is what I felt when I was entrusted with the work of preparing this book on Kunnathur Paadi

Muthappan. I could write the book without much difficulty, with the blessings of Lord Muthapan. in a foreign language. Explaining in detail the native rituals involved a lot of over narration. But as far as possible, I have taken care to preserve clarity, by resorting to brief yet communicative descriptions.

Let me thank Shri S.K. Kunhiraman Nayanar, for having entrusted me with this holy task. He was kind enough to provide me with the necessary information on the myth of Sree Muthappan. His family still protects and sees to the welfare of Muthappan at present. Shri Priyadarsan Lal's monograph in Malayalam has helped me a lot, since it gives an exhaustive account of the shrine. I am grateful for this indirect help. Shri. E. K. Govinda Varma Raja, instilled in me the courage to take up this work. I am happy that I could do justice to him by completing the book. It was my interest in folklore which helped me complete this mission. I bow before my teachers who made this possible.

Above all, I pay obeisance to that wonderful deity Lord Muthappan for blessings me this work. With folded hands, I pray to him to reign over Kunnathur Paadi, forever, being a solace to the natives.

Let me place this book as an offering to Lord Muthapan, the Almighty.

Dhanu 2, 1172

17-12.1996

Usha Namboothiripad

KUNNATHUR PAADI:
GOD'S OWN LAND
(Myth and history of Sree Muthappan)

Getting away from the hustle and boredom of our daily life, let us for some time ramble through the mountain ranges of Kunnathur Paadi in Kannur District of Kerala where Lord Sree Muthappan reigns. These mountain ranges almost touching the sky are a feast for the eyes. Sree Muthappan, the deity who rules over the place, has a lot to tell.

A Divine Encounter

Gods too, sometimes have origins. That is why our land is rich with innumerable tales of gods and how they were created. They glisten with the brilliance of a wonderful era when gods and human beings could interact with each other. During those times gods were never inaccessible, which made them behave like ordinary human beings. The origin myth of Sree Muthapp'an is also a similar one.

Dvapare Yuga was coming to a close. There in heaven on a full moon day, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesware assembled. The other gods too were present, and the Rishis (sages) also with their saintly wisdom, came for this rare get together.

It was rapturous delight. The gods and goddesses decided to enjoy during this wonderful event of festivity. They began dancing in sheer ecstasy. Finally they were totally unaware of anything but the joy that they experienced. At this time, when space and time seemed to be in a standstill, Lord Siva created his replica, thinking that nobody else would notice it. But the shrewd Lord Vishnu could not be cheated. He was the only person among those assembled, who noticed this secret trick of Siva.

So Vishnu also created his own replica about which Siva did not know. Siva's creation, went to the world, fully armed for destruction. Vishnu's creation set off to Badarinath to perform penance. Siva's creation, after destroying the Rakshasas (demons), started killing the Rishis. This disturbed the whole universe. The Rishis went to devaloka and asked Chitragupta, the infallible clerk of Yama, the god of death, whether such a person has been created. Chitragupta was not aware of such a

creation. Now, they with Devendra went to Lord Brahma, the creator to ask about the creation of such a person. Brahma too did not know of the creation of the destructor. The group decided to ask Lord Siva, the whereabouts of the person who was creating such a big havoc in their lives. When asked, Siva replied that he had created, but expressed his helplessness to control the destructive being. Only Mahavishnu could find a solution for this grave problem, said Siva. At the same time, seeing all this through divine vision, Mahavishnu, lying on Adishesha with Mahalakshmi at his feet, laughed. Mahalakshmi asked him the reason for his laughter. He told her that they were going to witness real fun. The Devas and Rishis approached Vishnu. Vishnu revealed the fact that seeing Lord Siva create, he too had created his replica who was doing penance at Badarinath. They decided to go to Badari. Vishnu's creation at Badari was overjoyed on seeing his creator. And he asked the Lord what he expected of him. He ordered him to fight Siva's creation for the welfare of the universe. He answered that he possessed no weapon. The Lord and the other celestials provided him with necessary weapons. He went to attack Siva's creation. A fight started. It was a very long fight which lasted for 12,000 years. Even after these neither of the parties won or lost. So Vishnu's creation asked Siva's creation what boon he wanted.

He asked Vishnu's creation the same question in return. Then Vishnu's creation asked him whether he would keep his word. The answer was in the affirmative. He said that two boons were required, of which one was that they would be friends and the other was that he should bless with his sword upside down. The war was over and the combatants were blessed. After this, Lord Siva's creation went to the hilly ranges of Puralimala for penance, while Vishnu's creation went back to Badarinath. At this time, sage Narada went to Badarinath and requested Vishnu's creation, to be born as the son of Ayyankara Nayanar and his wife, for the sake of protecting the world. Since Vishnu's creation is Vishnu himself, devotees believe that

Muthappan is an incarnation of Vishnu. They also believe that Muthappan is the son of Lord Siva.

The Birth of Muthappan

In Payyavur village, there was a Brahmin family known as Ayyankara. Long long ago, the lady of the Ayyankara family, accompanied by her friends, went for her usual luxurious bath, in the Payyavur River. Cleansing her body and shampooing her hair, she stepped into the river and took three dips. When she ascended from the river after the third dip, she heard the tinkling of anklets from somewhere around. She again dipped herself in the water thrice. Then she spotted something like a flower basket floating in the water. The next second what she saw on a rock was a smiling little baby. The lady who was worshipping Kiraatamurti of Payyavur to bless her with children was delighted at the sight. She ran towards the child, embraced it, and gave him the milk that was oozing from her breasts. She brought home the baby, and decided to bring him up as her own son. Her husband also was happy.

The boy grew up in the austere atmosphere of the family. He used to wander in the forest with his bow and arrow, and kill birds. He brought the carrion home, roasted and ate them. The mother ignored all this ‘unbrahminic’ acts due to the love she had towards the child. The foster father was not that patient. He started scolding his wife for the cruel acts of the boy. The mother tried her best to conceal the rebukes of her husband. But one day while she was weeping at her husband’s scolding, the son came to his mother and asked her “What did father tell you?. “I didn’t hear anything my dear son”, replied the mother. “If you did not hear anything with your ears, I, did hear with my holy ears. I will not stay here anymore. I am going to plunder Malanad”, said the son. She understood that the boy would not listen to her. So she gave him some advice. She told him that since the fierce look in his eyes evoked terror, he had to reduce the fury in them. He obeyed this, saying that he would wear false eyes, and

concealed his original eyes with a pair of silver eyes. He would get the smell of fish, if he walked through the seashore, said the mother. The son said that he would walk only through hills. If he was to go through the hills, he had to take a bayonet along with him, the mother said, He answered that if he took a bayonet, he would be called Vetikkurikkal, if he took a sword and a shield with him, he would be called a Padanaayar, so it was enough to take a bow made from palmyra, two arrows soaked in indigo, and a churika (double edged sword) with no bottom. And with four wolf cubs, and two tiger cubs to accompany him, the boy started his travail. The boy who disappeared like lightning was Lord Shri Muthappan himself, the lady realized.

The boy left Ayyankara, and went to the rock top in Tiruvankadavu. From there he went eastward to the high fort Muzhakkavallikkotta. There he saw the remains of a large fort. The boy dressed as the hunter king with peacock feather cap, went to the fort. From there he viewed all around. And in the south he saw the splendid Kunnathur Paadi which was radiant as the Mahameru Mountain. He walked towards Kunnathur Paadi.

Chantan, the Adiya tribesman of the Muuttooran illam, was a toddy tapper. The child, viewing Kunnattur Paadi from afar, first saw the palm tree from which Chantan was tapping. The boy requested him to give him toddy. But Chantan ignored him. All of a sudden, he was transformed into a stone. His wife, Pallaayikkudi Pennumpilla waited and waited for her husband. But to her utter consternation he did not return home. She went to an astrologer and asked him whether he could tell her where her husband was. The astrologer proclaimed that a god's curse had transformed Chantan into a stone. The woman prayed that she would offer the god malayilvittu, uuttu, tiruvappana and four amrutakalasangam, on the second day of the following month of Dhanu. Before she had completed her utter-ance her husband got back his original form, and reached home. The wife narrated everything that had happened. The god, thereafter revealed to the Adiya woman about what should be done to propitiate him.

Then he looked towards Karakkattedam. He gave the head of this family the power to look after him. And since then they have not cheated each other. The head of the family is known as Vaanavar.

From Kunnathur Paadi, the god started his travail once again. His first destination was Anayadipparambu, where there were two trees by the name urippumaram and taattimaram. Resting his bow against the tree, he destroyed the taliikkanti madappura with his feet. Crossing the Nuchyat River, he besieged the Orkattidam Pandiyala and paid his obeisance to Kaaliyar in Vayattur. He crossed the Tarakkaali River, and paid his respects to Kizhur Vairighatakan. He then conquered Kanniyattu Kalangode Madappura. Ascending the Poongode rock he danced victoriously. He visited the ruler of Puralimala, and got from him the ownership of Puralimala. There were many more conquests, till he came to Kunnathur Paadi. Finally, He decided to settle on the peak of the mountain, just on the eastern side of Payyavur.

Kunnathur Paadi : the modern profile

Kunnathur Paadi is blessed with the luscious growth of trees. The abundant vegetation provides a setting for a cool and calm atmosphere. On the eastern side of the road, the Kunnathur Paadi Devasthanam is visible. From there you see a long flight of steps. Ascending the steps, you reach Kunnathur Paadi, the green abode of Lord Muthappan.

In the cool shady Paadi, is an open space. There, facing the west is a cave. Inside the cave is a divine stone. On the western side of the cave, there is a stone, a stone bench and a high mud seat. On either sides of the cave stand two palm trees. Just northwards is a rivulet. If you go again north, you reach dense forests. This is where Aadipaadi is located. It was here that god appeared and Chantan was transformed into a stone. But since no human being has the strength of penance to worship here,

Muthappan himself suggested that they could construct a Paadi in the southern side and perform worship. On the peak of the mountain, where the rivulet starts, from the strong oozing water, emerge the earthen objects used to worship Muttappan. It is believed that these objects assume form from the water that spring from the mountain.

The official hierarchy in Kunnathur Paadi

The social structure in Kunnathur Paadi is such that mostly all communities have some part to play in the organisation of the Paadi. The following are the important groups, who have important roles to play in the Paadi.

1. Anhuuttaan Community

This is a minority community, which has a tale related to its origin. A young Nair lady who was pregnant went for a festival in the Payyavur temple. She lost her way and was unable to reach home. Her relatives went home in dismay, since they could not see her. A family in Payyavur protected her. Very soon, she gave birth to a baby boy. Lord Siva, the deity of Payyavur, felt pity for this woman and asked his son Muthappan to show her his original form. Muthappan showed her his real self, and ordered her that her son should represent him, and wear his attire during festivals. The ruler of Kottayam, knowing this, endowed him all honors and presented him a tract of land from his territory at Vallyayi which is even now known as Anhuuttaan parampu. Anhuuttaan is the most powerful among the teyyam artists.

2. Chantan

Muthappan's story tells that the first person whom he met in Kunnathur Paadi was the tribesman Chantan. When Chantan's family, known as Muutooran Kundumbam did not have progeny, the position was given to pullaayikkodi, another Adiya family. The eldest person in this family takes the role of Chantan.

3. *Komaram (oracle)*

Chantan's wife belonged to Kallaayikodi family. Muthappan had appeared to her and had given her the necessary instructions to propitiate him. Hence the position of Komaram was given to this family. The eldest person in this family traditionally has the right to become komaram.

4. *Kudupati*

Kudupati lights the lamp and executes the work ordered by the Vaanavar.

The Rituals in Kunnattur Paadi

The complex rituals that are associated with Kunnathur Paadi are numerous. In addition to the ordinary rituals like nityappainkutti (daily food offerings) and vilakkuveppu (lighting the lamp) which are performed daily, there are many others that are observed throughout the year.

Puttari

In north Kerala, the year begins on the first of Kanni which approximately falls on September 15th every year. On this morning the oracle performs vellaattam. Vellaattam is believed to be the person created by Siva who started penance on Puralimala. In the evening is the puttariyuuttu. The Paadi from the fields of Karakkaattedam is harvested, dried and ground into raw rice and puffed rice by the Adiyaatis, the tribal women. Vellaattam starts after offerings are prepared out of this. After vellaattam, the people assembled are given the rice taken out of the newly harvested paaddy.

Samkrama Vellaattam

On the first day of seven out of twelve months, Samkaramvellattam takes place. This ritual is conducted on the first day of the months other than Kanni, Tulam, Vrischikam, Dhanu and Karkidakam.

This starts around ten in the morning and goes on till 1 P.M. The head of the family of karakkattedam is the person who is entrusted with the rituals. It is believed that Muthappan, during his travel, had given the then head of the family, the title Vaanavar which means 'one who rules'. Even now the same family has the privileges that were once upon a time entrusted by the deity.

Under the supervision of the Vaanavar, a specific measure of paddy is given as offering called nivedyam. In addition, the oracle and Chantan are provided with their share. The Vaanavar also has his allotted share. Pulses also are measured. Muthappan loves particular kinds of fish and hunted game. And he is found of toddy too. All these are kept ready, and served to specific people who have some association with Muthappan.

Kalattilthira (Anthithira)

This festival takes place on the second of the month of Vrischikam (the Malayalam months starting from approximately the 15th. of November). The important events during this festival are Antittira and Vellaattam. Antittira is a special kind of ritualistic teyyam performance where the performer dresses himself as Vellaattam. This is said, has a great deal of comical element in it.

The Grand Festival (Tiruvutsavam)

The grand annual festival of the temple, starts on the second of the month of Dhanu (Dhanu starts approximately on the 15 the December), and continues for one month, till the second of Makaram (Makaram starts approximately. on the 15th January). As a prologue to the festival, different activities take place many days before the grand festival as such starts. This includes setting the whole place ready. The workers are not supposed to use any sharp instrument in the golden earth of the

god. Bamboo with sharpened edges is the only instrument that can be used to dig the golden earth of the god. The most important job is the construction of the madappura. Specific seats are constructed for the different officials who have close association with the Muthappan. The madappura constructed in front of the cave is supposed to be the sanctum-sanctorum. The construction starts on the 24th of the previous month, Vrischikam, and has to be finished on the 30th.

The festival as such, starts on the second of Dhanu. On the morning of this day, all the officials who have a part to play in the rituals are given measures of rice and clothes, according to the position that they hold in the hierarchy. At dawn, the high priests from the Matham at Payyavur arrive. The Vaanavar presents them with gifts of clothes. The high priests (tantri), after purifying the place performs Ganapati homam (fire offering to the elephant god Ganapati) and Bhagavati Seva (worship of Goddess Bhagavati). By noon, the rituals come to a close, and the Vaanavar, after giving dakshina to the Brahmins, accepts the prasadam. By evening, two Adiyans, deputed by Chantan, go to Payyavur, each carrying a torch made of bamboo. Once the aacharaveti is heard, all of them enter the Paadi with great pomp and glory. On that day, the Devasathanam of the Paadi offers the niramaala in the Payyavur Siva temple. The priest of the Payyavur temple also has to follow the tantri. People receive offerings from the tantri and the komaram (oracle) dress up. He wears the black bordered new dhoti presented by the Vaanavar, on top of which he ties the red cloth called pattu. On top of this, another adornment called 'Kaccilayum chorayum' is also tied. The traditional golden headgear, bangles, the yellow paste made of rice and turmeric smeared all over the body are the other adornments. The komaram after paying obeisance to the Vaanavar, walks to the Paadi with two churikas one made of silver and the other of iron. The Adiyar have to follow him with the ornaments, and other objects necessary for the festival. This is accompanied by drumbeats and fireworks. Chantan carries with him a silver bow and arrow. He also carries the

bhandarappetti (offering box) and the ornaments. Ascending the steps he reaches Kunnathur Paadi followed by the throng of devotees.

Although they reach the Paadi the people do not enter the madappura. The tantris enter the madappura and worship the deity. After pouring holy water on the rock that is supposed to be Chantan of yore, they come out of the madappura. Now the present representative of Chantan has to enter.

The komaram and Chantan do their offering inside the madappura, and outside where a kalasam (pot) is kept. Then one of the Adiya tribesmen, obeying the orders of Chantan, pay obeisance to the Vaanavar, who in turn gives him betel leaves and arecanut, through the kudupati who is an assistant of Vaanavar, doing all the necessary work associated with the temple. As soon as the betel leaf and arecanut are handed over to the Adiya tribesman, the blacksmith fastens a lamp on the pillar. This lamp has to be kept on lighted till the festival is over.

On the first of Dhanu, anhuuttaan Who is responsible to dress up representing Muthappan after performing worship, circumambulate the stone and lamp, chanting a hymn. This is intended to invite Muthappan from Puralimala to Kunnathur Paadi. After this, the anhuuttaan lies down to be dressed up as Muthappan.

When the dressing up is half way through, the Koramaram reaches the door of the madappura and dances in frenzy with a churika in his hand. He converses with the present Vaanavar, and his ancestors, and receives their blessings. As soon as this is over, Muthappan is dressed up Anhuuttaan with his face made up, and wearing a crown on his head now sings beautifully in the Sopanam style Kuttuvilakku, which is a long handled lamp. is held in front of his form known as tottam. Drums sound in the background. And in the front, torch bearers walk; the torch is made of bamboo. This is followed by veethu which is the distribution of toddy as and offering to the different families who have privileges to enjoy certain positions in the hierarchy of the temple.

After Veethu is the second tottam. When the song sung is more melodious than the previous. Two Adiya tribesmen hold the hands of the god during this time.

The god in different forms

On the second of Dhanu, Muthappan assumes four different forms. They are the representations of the four stages of the god.

The first one, called naaduvaazhissan deivam is the form of Muthappan as a baby. The god has bow and arrow as his weapon. The second form, known as puthiya Muthappan represents the god as a young boy. Then comes the third form, which is puranakala Muthappan. The next is the usual form which is known as tiruvappana. Muthappan, in this form is serious. He has black moustache and beard. He also has a false eye. Tiruvappana has majestic power. Anhuuttaan has to dance in all these four forms on the second of Dhanu.

The Tiruvappana can wear his head gear only after breaking a coconut daily, in front of the other deity veettaykkorumakan. He comes to the front door of the madappura and wears the headgear. Fireworks resound once the headgear is worn. As soon as the headgear is worn, two persons have to hold his hand and two have to hold the bamboo torch. After circumambulating thrice, he walks towards the peedakkallu. He circumambulates the peedakkallu. He is made to step down from the peedakkallu as soon as the food offering is ready. The food offering is supposed to have been accepted by the god, only after he circumambulates it. Then the god is supposed to visit the different people who have been related to his origin. He visits Chantan, as well as the ghost of Chantan. Vaanavar and the ghost of Vaanavar also have to be paid obeisance. The present Chantan is visited only after his predecessor's unseen presence is acknowledged. Now the Adiya women bow before him. After this, he blesses the flocking worshippers.

The next important ritual is pallivetta (honourable hunting). The god runs around in a circular motion seven times. Completing the seventh round, he turns back

and sends an arrow towards a coconut supposing it to be a hunting game. Pallivetta comes to a close with this.. At this time Chantan and komaram lead him to a seat on top. He listens and enjoys the drum beats for some time. Then the god hands over the churika given by the Adiyans to the komaram. As soon as the komaram receives it, he is in a frenzy. After chanting a hymn, the komaram takes the god to the front of the madappura door. Now the story of Muttappan is narrated.

After this is over, the Vaanavar opens the bhandarappetti (box of offerings). He takes out a bow and arrow made of gold, and puts it again inside the bhandarappetti. Then Vaanavar gives him his offering, which is the best liquor. This is followed by the offering to the tantri which should not be liquor. After this, comes the turn of all the devotees who offer money and other objects for the god. These are not put in the box. They are directly taken by the god who listens to the problems of the devotees. Only then does he put them into the box. Since the favorite offerings of the Muthappan are meat and liquor, they are placed directly into his hands.

On this day, rice giving ceremony is also performed for children. A specially is that Muthappan himself gives the rice which does not contain salt. Associated with Muthappan, the other deities are Moolam petta Bhagavati, Vellattam, Vettaykkorumakan and Uurpazhassi. When Muthappan arrived at Kunnattur Paadi, it is said that he was welcomed by Bhadrakali who was staying in the Paadi after killing the demon Darika. She is Moolan petta Bhagavati. During Muthapan's travail to conquer the whole world he met the person created by Lord Siva, doing penance, covered with roots and white ants. Muthappan's bow touched the covering and he woke up. This is Vellaattam. From then, they became friends. Veettaykkorumakan and Uurpazhassi are the local deities of the Paadi.

As in the beginning, at the end of the festival too, the place is purified. But now, the god himself sprinkles holy water all around. It should be remembered that during the beginning of the festival Muthappan was brought from the top of

Puralimala. Now, he has to be propitiated and sent back. On the 2nd of Makaram after one month of festivity is over, there is a ritual called kaliykkappaattu, for which the god circumambulates by running, and after kicking aside the burning embers on two sides, enters the madappura. After this the Adiya women clean up the surroundings. Anhuuttaan assuming his ordinary attire, circumambulates the stone representing Muthappan, and requests him to go back to Pualimala. It is supposed that the Lord according to the request sets off to Puralimala.

After three days, on the sixth of Makaram is a ritual called Kariyiti. The lamp that is lighted on the second of Dhanu is ablaze for the whole month. During these days, no ritual to favour Muthappan has to be conducted in any other place except Kunnathur Paadi. The god has ordained that those who want to see him at this time should visit him at Kunnathur Paadi alone, and not anywhere else. On Kariyiti day Chantan removes the lamp, and at that time the doors of all other places and houses have to be opened, and lamps lit.

The variety of rituals, and their complexity of Kunnathur Paadi are intriguing. Muthappan rules the lives of the folk there. They know that they can rely on this omniscient, omnipresent, deity. This deep faith and total sublimation to Muthappan makes them conduct the rituals in the most faithful manner.