Story of Pudhiyodhi

Submitted by BachamandaBelliappa

Pudhiyodhi is a Goddess who is popularly worshipped in the region of Naalnaad in Coorg. As the name suggestsNaal-naad means a land including 4 villages which are Kakkabe, Kunjila, Yavakapadi&Naaladi. Every summer, the festivities in the temple of Pudhiyodhi, are celebrated with pomp & glory in appreciation of the Goddess.

How did this Goddess become a part of the Kodava culture, what is the significance of the rituals carried out?

The below story answers most of the relevant questions. Hope you enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed putting it together.

**I**n the world of the past, few people troubled the world by being cruel &disastrous. Lord Shiva was worried about the innocent of the land & to put an end to the devastation caused, he created a supernatural power who was in the form of a woman who went by the name ‘Cheerumbe’. Trusting her, Lord Shiva hands over to her, some toxic dust to throw on the inhumane people that would kill them.

Little did Shiva know that she causes destruction to anybody not knowing if they were good or bad. So, guess what? Cheerumbe first, flings a fistful of that toxic dust right there at Shiva himself. While Lord Shiva is writhing in pain, Cheerumbe flees the spot & lands on Earth. Unable to bear the pain caused by the toxic dust, Lord Shiva immediately ignites a holy fire (*homakunda*) particularly of the firewood from the Jackfruit tree as he believed it to be medicinal for the burns that he suffered.

While he was exposing his body to the medicinal fume from the fire, another supernatural being emerges out of thatholy fire & that again was another woman. She went by the name ‘**Pudhiyodhi’**.

And since she comes from the fire, till date her possessed form (*thaere*) is always lit with plenty of lamps.

After Pudhiyodi appears from the flames, she questions Lord Shiva the reason she was summoned for, to which Lord Shiva narrates his plight about Cheerumbe& further adds to say that Cheerumbe would end up killing innocent people& that Pudhiyodhi should stop her & to help with that, this time he hands over some golden dust of hope in order to save lives.

As a practice, the devotees who visit the temple of Pudhiyodhi always receive some turmeric powder in significance to the golden dust of hope that Lord Shiva hands over to Pudhiyodhi.

Obeying Lord Shiva’s orders, Pudhiyodhi sets off & lands on Earth which is now a part of Kerala called Balapatanaad. As she ascends, Pudhiyodhi happens to forgether mission on Earth which was the responsibility that Lord Shiva had entrusted her with. Pudhiyodhi was now depressed about having forgotten about the task entrusted. In the hope of regaining her memory about her mission, she decides to go around the Earth 3 times. She begins her first round slowly & steadily; the second round was taken relatively faster & the third one was fast& fierce.

And as a mark of remembrance to this part of the story, the possessed form (*thaere*) takes the first two rounds calmly & the third one fiercely around the temple of Pudhiyodhi.

By now, Pudhiyodhi remembers her mission & sets out to find Cheerumbe’. After a long search, Pudhiyodhi was able to track Cheerumbe’. Cheerumbe’was equally quick. As soon as she saw Pudhiyodhi, she flung a fistful of toxic dust at Pudhiyodhi & Pudhiyodhi was smart enough to smear the golden dust on herself to protect from the damage that could be caused.Cheerumbe is astonished to see how Pudhiyodhi could protect herself & eventually also realises that she made a mistake in harming innocent people.

At this point Pudhiyodhi warnsCheerumbe, “I am allowed to come where you are, but you are no longer allowed to come where I am” to which Cheerumbe obeys the order.

Now Pudhiyodhi solitarily continues to travel & at some point she reaches a palace belonging to KullucheriKuriyappa, a devotee of Beerali Devi. She then knocks at the door & requests for some fruits & milk. Arrogant Kuriyappa, unaware of the fact that Pudhiyodhi was a Goddess, declined her requests for refreshment & shooed her away from his place.

Goddess Pudhiyodhi furious with rage at his gesture, burns his entire palace along with him, into ashes. And then suddenly Goddess Beerali appears at the site & feels bad looking at the plight of her devotee. But then Goddess Pudhiyodhi consoles Beerali saying “Your devotee was very rude; he was destined to die at my hands & thus I burnt him down. He was so impure that his ashes shouldn’t touch the ground which is why I am going to smear hisashes on my own forehead”

And once again, as a mark of this part of her journey, the possessed Goddess (thaere) has ash/black paste smeared on the forehead.

Beerali realises the powers of Pudhiyodhi & further joins her in her journey to heal the world. They travel in disguise in the form of two beautiful women. They gradually reach a place called PaadaaraKulentharawhere they come across a priest who is on his way to fetch some fruits & flowers as offerings to his Goddess Bhadrakaali. He spots these two beautiful damsels. He is charmed by their beauty & begins a conversation with them so as to impress them. Little did he know that they were Goddesses in disguise. These Goddesses (Pudhiyodhi &Beerali) were furious with his petty behaviour&plots on killing him. They lure him to go the nearby pond for him to bathe before he performs any Pooja to his Goddess. And when the time was right, Pudhiyodhi chops his head. By now as history repeats, Bhadrakali appears as her devotee (the priest) was killed & picks up a verbal fight with Pudhiyodhi. Pudhiyodhi was so outraged that she carries the entire Earth & places it on her own head.

As a significance of this act, even today the possessed form (*thaere)*has a symbol of sun & moon around the earth on the head.

Bhadrakali now becomes speechless looking at this spectacular act & further calms down but speaks up & says, “Now that I no longer have a priest on the Earth, I am entitled to all my offerings by myself”

And it is done to this day, that after the Bhadrakali thaere, chickens are slaughtered as offerings to the Devi Bhadrakali on the same day of Pudhiyodhi *thaere*.

Now Bhadrakali joins the other two Goddesses on their journey further on& guess who is following them? The ghost form of the priest whose head was chopped & now is popularly known as the Bramharaakshasa. Pudhiyodhi now tells him that he is no longer in human form. However, also gives him a boon saying, “Where I would take place for myself on Earth, I will let you to live a little away from me around the same place& from now on you will live as my guard”

*And the Beera thaere that we now know is the possessed form of this Bramharaakshasa.*

Meanwhile the entry of Pudhiyodhi on Earth, spread like wild fire all over the region (around the land of present Kerala). And people began worshipping her & she is popularly known to be the Goddess who can cure pandemic diseases & many other ailments.

Also, in the region of MogaralPuttur in Kasargod/Kerala, there was this particular community of people who were ancestrally architects popularly known as ‘Koleya’. Owing to their monopoly with architectural skills, they planned &built a temple for the Goddess Pudhiyodhi in Kasargod&began worshipping her there.Gradually the news of their architectural skills was so popular that they were asked to come to Naalnaad in Coorg to build a Vishnu temple at Keethirke.

(Keethirike is a place within Kakkabe where the Vishnu temple still exists)and the Chowndi thaere is hosted in this very regionevery year even today.

While theKoleyas travelled to Coorg for construction of this temple, they carried tools/weapons that belonged to the temple of Pudhiyodhi back in their land and entrusts the safe-keeping of the same to the house of the local Hebbars that live in Naalnaad.

Although the Koleyas were away from their land, in order to continue to worship Pudhiyodhi all the time, they allocate a small portion of land next to the construction of the Vishnu Murthy temple.

This place exists today too& offerings of puffed rice & coconut is a continuous practice till today by the Koleyas.

However, gradually in a place called Ammangeri, a temple was built exclusively for Pudhiyodi& all the tools/weapons associated with her is guarded at the temple itself. Each year, the festivities associated with Pudhiyodhi is carried out in with grand devotion & dignity.

This brings us to the end of the story that explains why & how Pudhiyodhi is worshipped in the land of Kodagu.

**Village & Address**

Pudhiyodhi temple

Ammangeri, Kunjila village

Kodagu – 571212

Festival dates: March 30 & 31st every year.