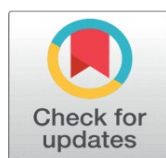


THE COSTUME AND DECORATIONS OF SREE MUTHAPPAN CULT OF NORTH MALABAR IN KERALA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ERUVESY- THE BIRTH PLACE OF SREE MUTHAPPAN

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ABSTRACT

The Muthappan God is a small cult, colourful and dynamic but of significant merely local to its place of origin at a small village, Eruvessy, the district of Kannur of Kerala state, India which is located 52 K M towards east from district headquarters. The place of origin of Muthappan cult is Eruvessy. The word Teyyam is perhaps a correction of the Sanskrit word 'Daivam' meaning a deity. The Muthappan teyyam ritual specialists wearing elaborate costumes seeks to portray the deity which can be a god or the spirit of a famous personage long before deceased. The teyyam is in reality a moving idol or a human representation of the deity. The costume and decorations used in representing deity is said to be suggested to the Kolakkaran in a vision or dream. Thus, it hard under gone changes in modern times. Originally flowers and leaves, wood pieces and other locally available materials were used but for many others cotton, wood-coloured clothes and golden papers are used. The costumes involve artists and painters of considerable skill and ability and crafts manship. Teyyam as a whole is complex aesthetic ensemble involving music, song, dance and occasional events, among many other happenings.

Keywords: Kodumudy, Kolakkaran, Muthappan, Teyyam, Vellattom

1. INTRODUCTION

The name Kerala is of recent Provenance and literally means land of the keravriksha(Coconut palm tree) which derives from the ubiquitous plantations and groves that abound in this south western state of India. During the British colonial period Kerala became three distinctive parts, Malabar under the direct British rule, Cochin and Travancore, the two princely state respectively. The modern state of Kerala was formed after the freedom, during the linguistic reorganization of state November 1955.

Muthappan God is a cult, colourful and dynamic, but a significant merely local to its place of origin at a small village, Eruvessy of north Malabar in the state of Kerala. It is very accident and routed in the Malabar forests and become the liberator of the tribal and untouchable of origin. Muthappan teyyam specialists wearing elaborate costumes seeks to portray the deity.

Eruvessy is a small village in the located 52 k.m towards east from district headquarters, Kannur 495 km from state capital Thiruvananthapuram. It had 19 sub villages there were sufficient historical evidences for the earliest human settlements at Eruvessy. The Paleolithic canes found at Kattari and Trichabalam near Thaliparamba had at least this hypothesis. More ever many villages in the thaluks of Thaliparamba, Kannur and Thalassery had megalithic relics and lithic caves.

The last Thiyya dynasty of Kerala known as Mannanar had rules a reign of north Malabar with Eruvessy as their headquarters. What remains of the least Thiyya royal dynasty of north Malabar is being left to natural destruction due to negligence. There was reference about this dynasty in the 'pattola' of chirakkal kovilakom of Kannur. As the British came to India and started charging exorbitant taxes from local kings, things went wrong for mannanar king. Thus, the power was declined from 1882 onwards and the last king returned to Eruvessy in 1902 from exile and surrendered his kingdom to the British empire.

The place of origin of Muthappan cult is Eruvessy, on the hilly eastern region of district Kannur of North Kerala on the remort valley hills of Kudagu mountains of western ghats. There was a famous goddess temple known as Paddikutty Devi Temple who is believed to be the foster mother of Sree Muthappan. This Temple is located near the Palace of Mutedathu aramana and Elayidathu Aramana of Mannanar dynasty of Eruvessy, the last thiyya dynasty of Kerala. The ruins of the palace of the dynasty are still visible on the banks of river Eruvessy.

A particular tribal folk known as Mavilan were seen only in the thaluks of Thaliparambu of district Kannur and thaluk of Hosdurg of district Kasargod. These people had been settled in the villages of Eruvessy, Ellery, Thadikadavu, Vyakara. Their tribal chief was known as Chingattanmar and they were experts in black magic, tribal medicine and teyyam performance and often they act as assistance in the teyyam ritual.

The word teyyam is perhaps a corruption of the Sanskrit word Devian meaning a deity. The Muthappan Teyyam ritual specialists wearing elaborate costumes seeks to portray the deity which can be a god or a spirit of a famous personage long before deceased. The teyyam is in reality a moving an idol or a human representation of the deity. The representation of God is through the body of the ritual specialists clad in elaborate costumes, the symbols in costumes as well as the diagrams etched in the ritual specialist body in paint and then in these utterances, but there is also an element of movement and dance which is absent in the Brahminical Hinduism. (Icons, sacred diagrams and mantras).

The costumes and decorations used in representing the deity is said to be suggested to the Kolakkaran in a vision or dream. As a matter of fact the design has undergone change in modern times. Originally flowers and leaves, wood pieces and other locally available materials are used but for many others cotton, wood, coloured clothes and golden papers are used. All these are available in the market now a days. At Payano, a town in north Kerala there is a shop selling socially for Teyyam costumes and decorations are popular among the teyyam artists and specialists. Most of the articles selling were made of synthetic artifacts and readymade goods including the artificial flowers. According to Jayaraj Peruvannan, a famous Teyyam specialist of Eruvessy, the artist and performers who engaged in Teyyam costuming and decorations are not ready to spent much time and energy for the preparation and making of costume materials. The costuming involves artist and painters of considerable skill and ability and crafts such as weaving and fashioning of intricate artifacts and ornaments.

The headdress is supposed to be the soul of the Muthappan Teyyam and it had varieties of art works and decorations which needs much skill and patience. The Muthappan headgear is undoubtedly an artistic creation of great value. These skills have been handed down over the generations and have also undergone development and the usage of more modern materials in contemporary times is evocative of an art that is not static but which seeks great passion and creativity. The wearing of the headdress is in teyyam , a formal ritual by itself, done Infront of the shrine where the spirit of the deity is believed to reside and is one of the main processes designed to evoke the spirit of the Kolakkaran (the shrine or Madappura is absent in Eruvessy since Eruvessy is believed to be the birth place of Sree Muthappan from which the spirit of Muthappan is transmitted to other villages like Kunnathoorpady and Parasshinikadavu near Kannur.)

Teyyams have been performed to free ancestral spirits cursed to wander the earth, to exorcise individuals possessed by evil spirits, for removing female infertility and for protecting the foetus in the womb. In some cases the teyyam originates in an effort to appease a spirit who is exacting revenge for harm done on a family or community. Theyyams can be performed Infront of a shrine or in a temple, but also in individual households and shops involving considerable expense. Even many high caste brahmin such as Namboodiri have Teyyams performed in their houses.

Particular castes have their on Eashtadevata to be enacted as teyyams like Pottan Teyyam, the patron god of pulaya community. Each god or goddess will have a special role to play and will be propitiated in a Teyyam ritual for the fulfillment of a particular need. But there are others who like Pan – Hindu deities are worshipped by everyone and not for a specific need. The Muthappan god is an example of this.

The transition of tribes to castes happened when the people turned to agriculture and a more stable and permeant type of employment and residence. The Namboodiri's might have played leading role in this metamorphosis. The Namboodiri's had knowledge of metallurgy, astronomy and climatic seasons necessary to clear forests and establish agricultural lands. Some of the tribes like Mavilan and Karimpalans of Eruvessy had engaged in Muthappan Teyyam are resident not only in the hills and forest but also in the plains.

To anthropologist Levi-Strauss myths are the crystallization of human aspiration. Thus, Myths have a social significant that goes beyond the question of their factual veracity. Muthappan becomes a powerful symbol of social protest against the indignities and sufferings to which the untouchables and forest dwellers. (There are in many instances untouchables driven to the forests to escape caste persecution.) have been subjected to. The reality may be different but Muthappan as a liberator and emancipator of these victims from caste-based discrimination and oppression has immense value to these people.

The Muthappan rite starts with the performer invoking the deity that he is going to manifest and reciting the deity's mythical story. Once invoked, the performer's body and face are painted in the manner appropriated to the deity that he is becoming. The manifestation of the Teyyam in its most complete and ordered form is achieved when the Teyyam performer is masked and is dressed in the regalia of the deity. The ritual process seems to have three clearly demarcated stages. In the first, Teyyam appears with very little costuming. This the torram (praise) stage in which the Teyyam will sing songs praising the deity or spirit involved and recounting its history and legends connected with it. The short songs of invocation that calls him from his mountain abode at Kunnathoorpady about 20 K.M away from Eruvessy in the eastern hills of Kannur district. Only a single drum will be the accompaniment. This is called illamkollam (young kollam) The Kolakkaran then returns to the concealed costuming area and reappears with some or costuming and performs other elements of the Teyyam rituals with much music. This is known as Vellatt. (When the teyyam ritual is conducting in houses or shops we cannot find this type of 3 stages in a categorized form.

These stages can be compared to the infancy, youth and maturity of a person's life. Alternatively, there could be an aspiration to identify the gods with pan – Hindu supreme beings such as Vishnu and Siva employing the ideology of Advaita. Valiya Muthappan is considered to be an avatar of Vishnu born in inferior hilly north Malabar for the emancipation of tribals from caste discrimination and the Cheria Muthappan, the representation of Shiva who helps Shiva in his tasks. This is in line with the ideology of the avatars enunciated in Bhagavat Geetha.

The Teyyam of Cheria Muthappan usually appears as a simple, infirm old man. he has a white moustache and beards and wears a red loin cloth. His body is painted with purifying turmeric paste, he has a pot bell, his back is hunched by age, and his lips tremble in the palsied manner of those of very advanced years. His conical headdress(kodumudi) is made from a variety of medicinal flowers and plants, predominant among which is Thulasi (loci mum sanctum) this plant which is used in ayurveda is understood to cure humeral imbalances and associated illness and diseases including those of anxiety and stress. The main head piece, which represents matted hair and / or a coiled python also has cobras set into it. Muthappan's healing and magical powers as a sorcerer are indicated by this headdress. This form of Muthappan is commonly associated with god Shiva and more recently with lord Ayyappa, another popular deity of central Travancore.

2. CONCLUSION

On the day of the ritual, the performer goes through a process of transformation, acquiring the shakthi of the Teyyam. The recitation of the mantras has a great importance in the process, the painting of the body and face is not makeup but a precise writing and designed mantra that is recited during the performance which bring in the shakthi of deity. Teyyam is a multi-faceted phenomenon. It can be interpreted as a pre-Hindu worship ritual, as the deification of ancestors, heroic figures and special personages, as defining caste configuration and as a form of social protest.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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