COLOUR AND SYMBOLISM IN THE PERFORMANCE TRADITION OF NORTH KERALA: A STUDY ON THEYYAM

A thesis submitted during 2025

to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Centre for Folk Culture Studies

by

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July 2025

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"Colour and Symbolism in the Performance Tradition of north Kerala: A Study on Theyyam"** submitted by Sreerag. T. P bearing Registration Number. 17SFPH01 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for award of Doctor of Philosophy in Centre for Folk Culture Studies is a Bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

This thesis is free from Plagiarism and has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for award of any degree or diploma.

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A. Paper published in the following research journal:

1. "Narratives and Beliefs: Symbolic meanings in the Mudi and Mukathezhuthu of Theyyam"." *The Eastern Anthropologist (1947-2022), Special Issue on Orality and Folk Culture*, vol. 75, no. 1-2, p. 113. (ISSN: 0012-8686),

B. Papers presented in the following Conferences:

1. "Art and Cultural Symbolism, A Case Study on Theyyam Mudi (Headgear)", 27th All India Annual Conference of FOSSILS jointly organized by the Department of Folklore and Tribal Studies & FOSSILS from 25-03-2021 to 27-03-2021
2. "Narratives and Beliefs: Symbolic meanings in the Mudi and Mukathezhuthu of Theyyam". the International Conference on "Transition and Transmission in Oral Tradition" from 20th to 22nd

January, organized by Department of Folkloristics and Tribal Studies, Central University of Karnataka, Kadaganchi, Kalaburagi, India.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirements for PhD:

Course code	Course title	Credit	Result
FS801	Introduction to Folk Culture Studies	4.00	PASS
FS802	Theories of folklore	4.00	PASS
FS803	Folklore- Field Methods	4.00	PASS
FS804	Review of Literature- Topic Related Course	4.00	PASS

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DECLARATION

I, **Sreerag. T. P,** hereby declare that this thesis entitled **"Colour and Symbolism in the Performance Tradition of north Kerala: A Study on Theyyam"** Submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Professor. Joly Puthussery** is a bonafide research. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodganga/INFLIBNET.

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Thesis Title: **"Colour and Symbolism in the Performance Tradition of north Kerala: A Study on Theyyam"**

Student Regd. No.: 17SFPH01

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Department/Centre: Centre for Folk Culture Studies

School: Social Sciences

Among the 17 goals, 4 and 15th SDG the work is incorporated

This thesis attempts to answer the same question that humanity is currently facing: whether humanity's future development should continue to focus solely on technological or scientific development, or whether we should look more within ourselves as an organism capable of consciously analysing transcendence and thus elevating an enlightened lifestyle that is sustainable for the world and for a quality education. This thesis heavily relies on the concept of the goal, as Theyyam is a multifaceted art form that has always played a role in developing and promoting the idea of nature and environment protection. This thesis focuses on the aspects of the Theyyam that are still important to the long-term evolution of nature and human life. This thesis is on the ecocentric, sustainable coexistence of humans and nature as shown in the ancient folk-art form of Theyyam. This thesis also investigates the significance of natural and organic material culture in the Theyyam, which is a key component of the sustainable development of humans and the environment. The thesis has examined the significance of components of Theyyam that are beneficial for ecology and future sustainable development by examining the usage of organic and natural material culture that is still a part of the Theyyam in the current era of technological innovation. Another objective of this thesis is to provide high-quality education by means of interdisciplinary learning from a broad knowledge base. In order to provide a high-quality education that is founded on a wide range of information, this thesis attempts to engage with other knowledge systems and link those concepts.

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I want to sincerely thank **Prof. Joly Puthussery**, my supervisor, for being very helpful and approachable with all of my questions and concerns regarding the thesis. His advice and assistance enabled me to resolve several challenging thesis-related issues during my PhD. From the beginning till the thesis was finished on schedule, his constructive feedback was always beneficial.

I would also like to thank **Prof. Sudhakar Reddy** and **Kanaka Durga** for their insightful comments. Their creative viewpoints on folk culture guided me through complicated circumstances throughout my PhD studies. I also want to express my sincere gratitude to **Prof. M. N. Rajesh,** sir, a member of my doctoral research committee, for his numerous conversations and recommendations that allowed me to have a perception of the subject.

I am also thankful to the Centre for Folk and Culture Studies for providing essential resources and an encouraging atmosphere for my research work. My thanks extend to other faculty and staff members of the department and administration, who aided me in various stages of the PhD academic career.

I also want to express my gratitude to the people who helped me produce my thesis, especially the Theyyam performers and experts who helped me collect information about the Theyyam performance. Additionally, I would want to thank my friends and other Theyyam enthusiasts for making it simpler for me to get familiar with, observe, and relate to the art form. Everyone who has managed to dedicate their valuable time to help me learn more about Theyyam is greatly appreciated. I will always treasure the names of **Anil Kumar, Unni Krishnan, Ashwin, Ajayan Chunkam, Priyesh Kuniyan, Aneesh Peruvannan, Dinesh,** and **Vineesh Choyal**; their kind actions enabled me to locate some of the most priceless Theyyam performances. Additionally, I would like to thank **Noushad Calicut** and **Arun Pookode** for their assistance in gathering some of the vernacular works on Theyyam and folklore. I also want

to express my gratitude to institutions like the **University of Calicut** and the **Kerala Folklore Academy** for helping me gather some important data on folklore in general and the Theyyam performance in particular.

Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the University Grant Commission (UGC) for awarding me the grant that I obtained in the NET-JRF test. The expected funding for the research project comes from the junior and senior research grants. Without it, it would have been harder to pursue the research.

I am also grateful to my department, the **Centre for Folk Culture Studies, School of Social Sciences**, for helping me achieve my goal of understanding the subject and writing about it with clarity and freshness. Research became interestingly multidisciplinary as a result of learning and studying in this field. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to the **Department of Fine Arts at the S N School of Arts and Communication, UOH,** where I completed my master's degree in fine arts. This institution also fosters an interdisciplinary approach to education. I believe that in order to make the topic essentially perceived, an interdisciplinary approach to study is necessary. I am so grateful to both of the University of Hyderabad's institutes for enabling me to acquire knowledge in a broad, multidisciplinary field.

I would also want to express my gratitude to **Ms. Dhanalakshmi** and **Laxman**, the **Centre for Folk Cultural Studies'** staff. In the same way, I am grateful to the staff members of the **University of Hyderabad IGM Library** for providing me with access to several books and papers that aided me in writing my thesis. Next, I would like to express my gratitude to the **University of Hyderabad** administration for their numerous academic support services.

I also wish to thank my friends and colleagues. **Lekshmi Sasidharan, Jinu Antony, Yogesh Lakshmanan, Ahan Nair, Dinoop, Arjun Perim, Ashkar O. C. Kadirur, Aswini S, Nikila, Atul Kaladharan, Shine Shekhar, Govind Kanhangad, Pratheek Nair, Akshay Payyanur, Sameeksha Nambiar, Diwakar Upadhyay, Ophel Hansda, Nikhil Kutty, Hansika Arora, Arnab N. Biswas, Anandha Krishnan, Alen, Chinmay, Zahir Amini, Anujith Murali, Swaraj Kafoor, Arun M, Ajith Nedumangad, Digvijay**

Mishra, Deepika Sharma, Moona Krishnan, Amphu Terangpi, Santhwana, Drubha Nandha Roy, Himanshi Tyagi, Philathin Jogoi, Pradeesh Calicut, M. C. Mohan, and Pratima Sagar, who have always been part of the discussion about the topic and helped me in finding research references and materials.

I also wish to thank my father, **Shri Harindranath T. P.,** and my mother, **Smt. Ragini,** for believing in me to achieve my aspirations and also this Ph.D. thesis. There are many more people who supported me in achieving this thesis and made it into a fruitful idea of knowledge. Finally, I want to thank those people I forgot to mention in here who contributed, directly or indirectly, to the success of this thesis.

Thank you all for your well-wishing and support in this venture.

Mr. Sreerag T P

Contents

List of Figures **xvi**

List of Tables **xxii**

Glossary **xxiii**

1. Introduction **1**

1.1 Theyyam and its evolution 1

1.2 Colour 5

1.3 Greek theories on Perception of Colour 5

1.4 Issac Newton experiment on light spectrum 6

1.5 Colour and psychology 7

1.6 Red colour and Psychology 10

1.7 Colour symbolism and culture 11

1.8 Symbol 12

1.9 Significance of study 17

1.10 Nature and scope of study 19

1.11 Geographical area of study 20

1.12 Survey on previous literature 21

1.12.1 Literature on theoretical work in art history, folklore, visual art 22

1.12.2 Literature on Theyyam performance and Theyyattam 26

1.12.3 Literature on vernacular studies of Theyyam performance 27

1.13 Lacunae in previous literature 28

1.14 Hypothesis 29

1.15 Theoretical frame work 30

1.16 Aims and objectives 38

1.17 Methodology 38

1.18 Field Methodology 39

1.19 Brief Chapterisation 44

2. Dynamics and Structure of Theyyam in north Kerala 48

2.1 Geography and colour concept 48

2.2 Cultural geography of Kerala 52

2.3 North Kerala (Malabar) an Overview 52

2.4 Colour Aesthetic in Theyyam 54

2.5 First artist and the conceiver of Theyyam 55

2.6 Theyyam, structure and dynamics 55

2.7 Ancient Administration 60

2.8 Representation of old identities in Theyyam blessing 61

2.9 Communities of Theyyam 62

2.9.1 Tulu Velan community 62

2.9.2 Malayan community 63

2.9.3 Mavilan community 64

2.9.4 Pulaya communities 65

2.9.4.1 Sacred spaces of Pulayas or *Kottam* 67

2.9.5 Vannan Communities 67

2.9.6 Koppalan community 69

2.9.7 Munoottan and Anjoottan 71

2.9.8 Kalanaadikal 72

2.10 Categories and characterisations of Theyyam 72

2.10.1 Mother goddesses 74

2.10.1.1 Mother Goddesses came by wooden ship 76

2.11 *Aniyalam* (Makeup and Costumes) of Theyyam 76

2.11.1 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) 78

2.11.2 *Mudi* (Head gear) 81

2.12 The ritual of Theyyam *kettu* (Art of making Theyyam) 86

2.13 Theyyam Embellishment materials and their usages 92

3. Color and Symbolism of Mother Goddesses cult in Theyyam 101

3.1 Origin of mother goddess's cult 101

3.2 Evolution and diffusion theories of Mother Goddess cult 102

3.3 Mother Goddesses cult in India 104

3.3.1 *Dhanya Devatharadhana* (grain goddesses' worship) 105

3.3.2 *Kanyaka* Theyyam (Virgin Goddesses) 105

3.4 Traditional Mother Goddesses worship of North Malabar 106

3.4.1 Kurathi Theyyam 107

3.5 *Grama Devathamar* (Village Goddesses) 111

3.6 Victim incarnated goddesses after death 112

3.6.1 Muchilotu Bhagavathy 112

3.6.2 Kandangotu Makkam 116

3.7 *Yudha Moorthikal* (War goddesses) 119

3.7.1 Chamundi worship 119

3.7.1.1 Karim Chamundi 120

3.7.1.2 Pula Chamundi 121

3.7.1.3 Raktha Chamundi 123

3.7.1.4 Kundor Chamundi 126

3.8 *Manthra moorthikal* (magical idol Theyyam) 128

3.9 *Naayattu devathamaar* (Hunting goddesses) 128

3.10 *Vana devathamaar* (Forest deities) 128

3.11 *Rokakaarikalaya Devathamaar* (diseases inflicting goddesses) 129

3.12 *Urvarya Devathamar* (fertility Goddesses) 129

3.13 Formal and Structural symbolism of Mother Goddesses 130

3.13.1 Mudi (headgear) of mother goddesses in Theyyam 130

3.13.2 Circular shape in mudi (headgear) 131

3.13.2.1 *Vatta mudi* (Circular Headgear) 131

3.13.2.2 *Purthattu mudi* 132

3.13.3 Triangular shape in *mudi* (headgear) 134

3.13.3.1 *Valiya mudi* (huge headgear) 134

3.14 Colour Symbolism in Theyyam Mother Goddesses 138

3.14.1 More than the colour red, pigment materials

of *mukathezhuthu* 140

3.14.1.1 *Chayilyam* (vermillion pigment) 140

3.14.1.2 *Manayola* (Orpiment) 143

3.14.1.3 *Chenchilyam* 144

3.14.2 Red color in Theyyam material culture 144

4. Colour and Symbolism of Heroes and Ancestor deity Worship 149

4.1 Ancient Heroic ancestral tradition in India 150

4.2 Ancient Heroic Ancestral Tradition in Theyyam 152

4.2.1 Kativanur Veeran 152

4.2.2 Angakkaran Theyyam 157

4.2.3 Kshetrapalakan Theyyam 159

4.2.4 Muthappan Theyyam 166

4.2.5 Vettaykorumakan Theyyam 172

4.2.6 Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam 175

4.2.7 Vayanaattu Kulavan (Thondachan) 182

4.2.8 Thekkan Kariyathan 185

4.2.9 Kannikorumakan Theyyam (Manicheri Daivam) 189

4.2.10 Kudiveeran Theyyam 191

4.2.11 Palanthayi Kannan/ Vishnumoorthi Theyyam 193

4.2.12 Poomaruthan Theyyam 198

4.3 Formal and structural symbolism of Theyyam hero worship 200

4.3.1 Triangular shape in *mudi* (headgear) 201

4.3.2 Circular shapes in *mudi* (headgear) 203

4.4 Colour Symbolism in Theyyam male hero deities 204

4.4.1 Colour red in evolution History of male deity 205

5 Colour and Symbolism of Magical, Otherworldly and Animal Deity 208

5.1 Legends of animal deity and symbolism on attire 209

5.1.2 Mudhala Theyyam 209

5.1.3 Pulli Karimkali and Pulikandan Theyyam 211

5.1.4 Puliyoor Kannan 214

5.1.5 Puliyoor Kali 214

5.1.6 Kadam Puli 215

5.1.7 Puli Maaruthan 215

5.1.8 Kala Puli 216

5.1.9 Panchuruli Theyyam 216

5.1.10 Puli Maranja Thondachan 217

5.2 Snake deities 220

5.2.1 Nagakanni 221

5.2.2 Nagarajan 221

5.2.3 Naga Bhagavathy 222

5.2.4 Naga Kali 223

5.3 Pottan Theyyam 223

5.4 Pula Maaruthan 236

5.5 Gulikan Theyyam 237

5.6 *Manthramoorthikal* (magical powered idol/deities) 240

5.6.1 Kutti Chathan 241

5.6.2 Karim Kutti Chathan 245

5.6.3 Poo Kutti Chathan 246

5.6.4 Thee Kutti Chathan 247

5.6.5 Para Kutti Chathan 247

5.6.6 Khandakarnan Theyyam 248

5.7 Structural Symbolism of Magical, Other worldly and Animal deities 250

6 Conclusion **252**

6.1 Sacred Geometry and Eco centric Ritual: Theyyam's

Symbolic Cosmos 253

6.2 Theyyam's Red Aesthetics and Catharsis 255

6.3 Theyyam Art’s Symbolic Materials and Ancient Traditions 256

6.4 Theyyam: A Mystical Tradition for Enlightenment and Unity 257

6.5 Symbolic Colours and Colour of Headgear in Theyyam 257

6.6 Circular geometry in Theyyam 261

6.7 Square geometry in Theyyam 262

6.8 Theyyam Structural form and Tantric influence 263

6.9 Psychological dimensions of Circle, Triangle, Square Geometry in Tantrism and other Philosophies 263

6.10 Psychological dimensions of Colour and Geometrical Shapes in Theyyam 266

6.11 Global Cultural significance of the Fundamental Shapes 268

6.12 The intervention of logical reasoning and creative thinking through Geometry 269

6.13 Foundational geometry and its connection with Universe 271

6.13.1 Circular geometry 271

6.13.2 Square geometry 274

6.13.3 Equilateral Triangle geometry 275

6.14 Human made architectural expression of cosmic aspiration 277

6.14.1 Tower of Babel 278

6.15 Fundamental Geometries and Fractal pattern in Cheops structure, a rethinking of pyramid building. 280

6.16 Theyyam as Cosmic Architecture 286

List of Figures

1.1	Map of Kannur district	21
2.1	Tlaloc, Aztec rain god.	49
2.2	Haida chieftain house or Haida plank house.	50
2.3	The application of a base layer of water-based *chayilyam* (vermillion).	88
2.4	The application of the drawings and pattern using the oil-based *chayilyam* (vermillion).	88
2.5	Fastening of the *oda kol* (two-stick armature) to the body of the performer to place the structures of *oda* and *mudi*.	89
2.6	Placing and tying of the *oda* (structure tied to waist for fastening *mudi* or headgear).	89
2.7	Theyyam after placing of *oda* (structure tied to waist for fastening *mudi* or headgear).	90
2.8	Fastening of *mudi* (headgear) over the head of performer.	91
2.9	Fastening of *mudi* (headgear) with the help of Theyyam specialists.	91
2.10	Thiruvarkattu Bhagavathy Theyyam after placing all the embellishments.	92
3.1	The ritualistic performance of Kurathi Theyyam.	109
3.2	The ritualistic performance of Kurathi Theyyam.	109
3.3	Performance of Kurathi with all embellishments.	110

3.4 Performance of Kurathi with all embellishments. 110

3.5 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kurathi Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 111

3.6 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Muchilottu Bhagavathy, drawn by the researcher. 115

3.7 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kandangotu Makkam, drawn by the researcher. 118

3.8 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Karim Chamundi Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 121

3.9 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Pula Chamundi, drawn by the researcher. 123

3.10 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Raktha chamundi, drawn by the researcher. 125

3.11 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kundor Chamundi, drawn by the researcher. 126

3.12 Madayil Chamundi with all the embellishments during performance. 132

3.13 The five tattvas. 133

3.14 Preparation of *valiya mudi* of Kalariyaal Bhagavathy. 134

3.15 *Valiya mudi* of Kalariyaal Bhagavathy and Pazhassi Bhagavathy. 135

3.16 Tantric device representing Shiva Shakthi emergence. 136

4.1 Kativanoor Veeran Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 156

4.2 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kativanoor Veeran Theyyam,

drawn by the researcher. 157

4.3 Angakkaran Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 158

4.4 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kshethrapalakan,
drawn by the researcher. 160

4.5 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) process of
Kshetrapalakan Theyyam. 162

4.6 Fastening the embellishments of Kshetrapalakan Theyyam. 163

4.7 Fastening of *meyyabharanam* (body ornaments)
and *Thaadi* (beard). 164

4.8 Kshetrapalakan with all its embellishments,
in between the performance. 165

4.9 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Muthappan Theyyam,
drawn by the researcher. 168

4.10 Muthappan Theyyam performing with all
its embellishments. 169

4.11 *Mekhezhuthu* of Muthappan Theyyam. 170

4.12 Frontal and rear views of Muthappan Theyyam
after the makeover. 171

4.13 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Vettakkorumakan,
drawn by the researcher. 173

4.14 Vettaykkorumakan Theyyam with all the embellishments,
drawn by the researcher. 174

4.15 *Mukathezhuthu* of Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam,

drawn by the researcher. 177

4.16 Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam just before the fire leaping ritualistic performance. 179

4.17 Kandanaar Kelan in between the fire leaping ritualist performance. 180

4.18 Kandanaar Kelan after the fire leaping ritualistic performance. 181

4.19 *Mukathezhuthu* of Vayanattu Kulavan, drawn by the researcher. 184

4.20 *Mukathezhuthu* of Thekkan Kariyathan, drawn by the researcher. 187

4.21 Kudiveeran Theyyam performing with all its embellishments. 193

4.22 *Mukathezhuthu* of Palantayi Kannan, drawn by the researcher. 195

4.23 Palantayi Kannan Theyyam is performing with a composite crown. 196

4.24 Palantayi Kannan performing with *koralaaram.* 197

5.1 Upper portion of *mudi* (headgear) of Mudhala Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 210

5.2 *Mukathezhuthu* of Puli Karimkali Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 212

5.3 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Pulikandan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 213

5.4 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Puliyoor Kali with two symmetrical tiger drawings on the cheek, drawn by the researcher. 215

5.5 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Pulimaranja Thondachan, drawn by the researcher. 220

5.6 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Nagarajan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 222

5.7 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Naga Kali Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 223

5.8 Pottan Theyyam performs with all of its ornamentation. 230

5.9 *Mukappala* (face mask) of Pottan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 232

5.10 Pottan Theyyam performing the fire leaping ritual. 234

5.11 Pottan Theyyam with all its embellishment. 235

5.12 *Mukappala* (face mask) of Pulamaaruthan Theyyam. 237

5.13 *Mukappala* (face mask) of Gulikan Theyyam. 239

5.14 Ritualistic performance of Kutti Chathan Theyyam with fire torches, drawn by the researcher. 243

5.15 *Mukathezhuthu* of Kutti Chathan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher. 244

5.16 *Mukathezhuthu* of Karim Kutti Chathan, drawn by the researcher. 246

5.17 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Poo Kutti Chathan, drawn by the researcher. 247

6.1 *Valiya mudi* of Kalariyaal Bhagavathy, depicting the fire. 258

6.2 Structure of Theyyam with *valiya mudi*, which is made from the geometrical shapes. 260

6.3 Placing the *mudi* (headgear) of the Kalariyaal Bhagavathy Theyyam. 261

6.4 The posterior view of Thai para devata Theyyam *mudi* (headgear). 262

6.5 Picture depicting the idea of Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) that the

planets of the universe were made up of Platonic solids set within each other. 271

6.6 "Fibonacci spiral" reveals itself all over nature. 272

6.7 Tesselation of Poincaré ball model of hyperbolic space' with positive and negative curvature. 273

6.8 Babylonian map of the world 276

6.9 The (Great) Tower of Babel by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, c. 1563, 280

6.10 Drawing of elevation view of the pyramid of Cheops, drawn by the researcher. 281

6.11 Drawing of four adjacent base pyramids, conceived and drawn by the researcher. 282

6.12 Drawing of four adjacent base pyramids with four side internal ramps, conceived and drawn by the researcher. 283

6.13 The bottom portion of a pyramid or the well-balanced plateau-like structure. 284

6.14 Feasible contemporary architecture, conceived and designed by researcher. 285

List of Tables

2.1	Theyyams, community and the region of the performance.	56
2.2	*Marchamayam* (body embellishments) and the particular Theyyam who uses it.	77
2.3	*Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) and the particular Theyyam who uses it.	80
2.4	*Mudi* (headgear) and the particular Theyyam who uses it.	85
2.5	Theyyam embellishments and its usage.	92

Glossary

A*alunavar:* - Those individuals who adorns.

Akambadi: - Kings escorting personals.

Alamkaram: - Ornamentations.

Angam: - The traditional conflict between opposing parties.

Aniyalam: - Makeup and embellishment item of Theyyam.

Aniyanulla: - Things to wear.

appease serpent deities.

Arachamayam: - Abdomen embellishments of Theyyam.

Arali poov: - Oleander flower.

Arangettam: - Initiation into stage performance.

Arichaandu: - Rice paste.

Arimaavu: - Rice paste.

Ashtadhalam: - Eight petals of flower.

B*honam samarpikkal:* - Meal devotion.

Bhramachariyam: - Celibacy.

Bindu: - Dot or point of attention.

C*handrakala:* - Cresent shape symbol.

Chayillya theppu: - Cinnabar makeover.

Chayilyam: - Mineral cinnabar used to obtain red coloured pigment or vermilion pigment.

Chemanthi: - Chrysanth flower.

Chembakam: - Champak flower.

Chembarathi: - Hibiscus flower.

Chenda melam: - Drum beats.

Glossary

Chenda: - Drums.

Chethi poov: - Jungle geraniums, often known as jungle flame flowers.

Chingam: - The month in the Malayalam calendar corresponds to the period from August to September in the Gregorian calendar.

Chorachuttu udayada: - Blood coloured clothing.

Churikas: - Small compact sword.

D*eshavaazhi*: - Feudal rulers of regions.

Dhamshtra: - Teeth.

Dhanya devatharadhana: - Grain goddesses' worship.

Dhathurupi: - Metallic in nature.

E*davapaathi:* - The monsoon season begins in June.

Erppa: - The festival in the month of *Makaram* Malayalam month.

Ettillam: - The eight-family house.

I*danga vadanga:* - Indicating the ease of weaving using two hands.

Ilathaalam: - Traditional musical instrument of Kerala similar to small pairs of cymbals.

Illams: - Family kinship home.

Iranji poov: - Ilanji flower (Mimosops Elengi).

K*aakkaru*: -Feet embellishments of Theyyam.

Kaanjiram: - Poison nut tree.

Kaati Kombu: - Gaur horn.

Kaavu: - The sacred groove.

Kadappuram: - Sea shore.

Kadavu: - Ghat.

Kaikkaru: - Hand embellishment of Theyyam.

Kalam: - Pot.

Kalamezhuthu: - Ritualistic floor drawing

Kalayuka: - Eradicate.

Kalkaru: - Leg embellishment of Theyyam.

Kari: - Soot.

Karikku: - Tender coconut water.

Karkidakam: - The month in the Malayalam calendar corresponds to

the period from July to August in the Gregorian calendar.

Karnam: - Ear.

Kazhakkam: - Location of Theyyam performance.

Khand: - Throat.

Kidathan: - Another name for the Pulaya community.

Kireedam: - Crown.

Kodiyila: - End portion of banana leaf.

Kolam: - Effigy of Theyyam.

Komaram: - Oracle.

Kooda: - Round shaped reed baskets.

Kopu: - Embellishments.

Kotta: - Fort.

Kottam: - Shrine of Pulaya community.

Kozhipushpam: - Cockscomb flower.

Kumbham: - The month in the Malayalam calendar corresponds to the period from February to March in the Gregorian calendar.

Kumkum: - The powder vermillion used to put on the forehead.

Kuri: - Sacred paste is applied on the forehead.

Kuruthola: - Tender coconut fronds.

Kuruthola: - Tender palm fronds.

***M**aaruthan:* - Wind.

Makan: - Son.

Makaram: - The month in the Malayalam calendar corresponds to the period from January to February in the Gregorian calendar.

Malanad: - The hilly country.

Mallika poov: - Jasmine.

Manayola: - Mineral orpiment used to obtain yellow pigment.

Manthramoorthikal: - Magical powered idols.

Marakalam: - Wooden ship.

Marchamayam: - Body embellishments of Theyyam.

Maruthu: - Medicinal tree (Shorea robusta).

Masam: - Month.

Mashi: - Ink.

Medam: - The month in the Malayalam calendar corresponds to the period from April to May in the Gregorian calendar.

Meenam: - The month in the Malayalam calendar corresponds to the period from March to April in the Gregorian calendar.

Mekhezhuthu: - Bodily drawing of Theyyam

Meyyabharanam: - Bodily ornaments of Theyyam.

Mudi: - Headgear of Theyyam.

Mudira: - Horse gram.

Mukappalakal: - Face mask used in Theyyam.

Mukathezhuthu: - Face drawing of Theyyam

Mula choottu: - Bamboo fire torch.

Mula villu: - Bamboo bow.

Mular: - Breast plate.

***N**aagapadam:* - Serpent hood diadem.

Naduvazhis: - Feudal landowners.

Naduvazhunnutayavar: - Protecter and ruler of the land.

Nankavarnam: - Another name for the Kammalar community.

Neelam: - Blue pigment.

Neelam: - Indigo.

Nera: - festivities in the last days of the *Karkidakam* Malayalam month.

Noyambu: - Abstinence period.

***O**di vidhya:* - Impersonating magic skill.

Ompathillakkar: - Nine family settlement of Vaniyan community.

***P**aala maram:* - Scholar tree.

Pala kottunavar: - Benders of areca sheaths.

Pala kottunavar: - Benders of areca sheaths.

Pala: - Scholar tree.

Palliyara: - Theyyam's makeover chamber.

Parakuka: - To fly.

Parannu: - Fly.

Pathamudhayam: - The tenth dawn of the Malayalam month *Thulam* signals the commencement of the Theyyam season.

Pathillam: - Ten family house.

Peeli: - Peacock feather.

Pelya: - The storage box of ornaments of Theyyam.

Pichakam: - Pitchy flower.

Pooja: - Sacred propitiation for deity.

Poomaala: - Flower garland.

Pooram: - Festival celebrating the union of Parvati and Shiva.

Poov: - Flower.

Poykaalu: - Pseudo legs.

Poykannu: - Pseudo eye.

Prakriti: - Nature or female principle.

Pula: - Agricultural land.

Puli: - Tiger.

Pulluvan paatu: - Song was offered to

Purush: - Male principle.

Puthari: - Fresh new rice. The harvest festival takes place during the month of *Chingam* in Malayalam.

***R**aktha:* - Blood.

***S**arvaknja peedam:* - The pinnacle of wisdom.

Sattvika bhavam: - Compassionate expression.

Shankhu: - Conch shell.

Sivappu: - Red colour.

Stanam: - Shrine.

Swami: - Saint.

Swaroopam: - Certain regions are under authority.

***T**haadi*: - Beard

Thakidu: - Copper foils.

Thalachamayam: - Head embellishments of Theyyam.

Tharavaadu: - Ancestral house.

Theey: - Fire.

Thirikaikuda: - Another name for the Kaniyan community.

Thirumudi: - Venerated headgear of Theyyam.

Thoppi: - Cap.

Thottam: - The legend was chanted or invocation song before Theyyam's performance.

Thrishoolam: - Trident.

Thulam: - The month in the Malayalam calendar corresponds to the period from October to November in the Gregorian calendar.

Tirutatakkaran: - It indicates the ability to do magic and sorcery.

Tottam: - Ritualistic oral narrative song of Theyyam.

Trikona: - Triangle.

U*duppukal*: - Costumes worn by Theyyam.

V*anam:* - Forest.

Varavili: - Invocation process of Theyyam deities.

Varavili: - The battle ceremony of hero worship in Theyyam.

Vatham: - Killing.

Vellattams: - Performance narrations of each Theyyam genesis.

Vellottu: - White bronze.

Vetta: - Hunting.

Vibhuti: - Sacred ash paste applied over body and forehead.

Vithu pathram: - Grain vessel.

Y*aga:* - Ritualistic veneration of gods.

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 Theyyam and its evolution.

Theyyam is a ritualistic performance tradition that plays a vital role in the folk-art history of north Kerala. The Theyyam performance is known by several names, including Theyyattam, Kaliyattam, Kolamkettu, Thiraadiyantharam, Theyyamkettu, Kottiyaadikal, and Thirayattam. Etymologically, the name Theyyam refers to a grammatical synonym of the word *daivam* (god or goddesses), whereas *attam* indicates dancing. Thus, it reads "gods dance". According to Chandere, “The synonyms for Theyyattam symbolise distinct stages in its growth. Kali+*attam* (Kaliyattam, the Kali dance) is said to be the oldest ancient and originated among Kerala's indigenous communities. Then the word Theyyam is a modified version of Kaliyattam, established under the influence of the immigrant form of Bhuttas (a similar folk art from Karnataka), that had been most likely carried by the Thiyyas during their migration to the North Malabar region. Theyyam could possibly therefore reference the attam of Thiyyas (the dance of Tiyyas), a caste that migrated to Kerala from Karnataka.”[1] Theyyam continued to flourish for approximately two thousand years, particularly in north Kerala, and influenced cultural, social, political, and economic domains.

The main peculiarity of Theyyam is that, the human physiological body is transformed into a spiritual entity through the incorporation of mythological

[1] C.M.S, Chandera. *Kaliyattam*. National Book Stall, 1978, pp. 25-26.

and mystical elements from its long past in the form of symbolism, that adds to its divine essence to become a being of the supernatural. These symbols of it have been seize to exist through ages in its heritage in the form of oral and visual tradition. As a performing ritualistic visual tradition of gods and goddesses, Theyyam encompasses many dimensions and degrees of the creative and artistic domain, which comprises as sculpting, painting, and performance art, each within the framework of religious ritual. To accomplish the goal of establishing gods or goddesses, Theyyam professionals and artists make use of aesthetically archaic gestures and languages in their art. Though the history that is known of Theyyam is near, the unknown is vast, that is reflected in its extraordinary symbolic shape and form of its very art. Throughout the course of two thousand years, Theyyattam developed into approximately four hundred different kinds of Theyyams. Eminent folklorist Raghavan Payyanad describes Theyyam as the religion of the natives of north Kerala. He also suggests that "Theyyam is the culmination of the belief system, religious aspects, and mythology of the indigenous gods and goddesses."[2] Thus, this vivid and exalted folk performance tradition comprises forms of goddesses and gods, deified heroes and heroines, and other forms attributed with the ancient nature worship system. Because of its extensive history, Theyyam has undergone several transformations, which includes the amalgamation of multiple tremendous and trivial cultural traditions from India's religious pantheon.

Apart from other religious performances, Theyyam stands out for its inclusiveness of all levels of society and castes. Each community maintains its own Theyyam, which serves as the community's cultural identity. The tradition is a pure act of an iconic portrayal of divinity to achieve wish fulfilment and prosperity, which is engaged in lifecycle difficulties and challenges in each community. The reverence of each and every deity is aesthetically generated to

[2] Raghavan, Payyanad. "Theyyam and our times." *Sahapedia An Open Online Resource on the Arts, Cultures and Heritage of India | Sahapedia*, Indian folklife, 1 July 2001, www.sahapedia.org/sites/default/files/Ifl_06.pdf. Accessed 16 Aug. 2021, p.11.

experience the superficial uniqueness in the believers' perception. These aesthetic elements that compose Theyyam performance encompass a wide range of symbols that have been significantly moulded by historical and cultural factors throughout their transformation. In certain respects, the notion of socially established standards and values has been psychologically integrated in the colour and symbolism of Theyyam all through time. The relationship that exists between *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), *mekhezhuthu* (bodily drawing), *mudi* (headgear), and various additional costumes, in addition to embellishment with stories from another space-time, unconsciously continues the fundamental principles and ethos of the past, which is incredibly essential.

Thus, the current research of the colour and symbolism of Theyyam from north Kerala attempts to investigate within the framework of visual aesthetics. This is an investigation into the obvious and essential significance that colour and symbolism play in the creation and propagation of Theyyam into a transcendental or supernatural realm of existence. This study is crucial since the transformation of normal human to supernatural divine identity is integral to the Theyyam as well as is depended upon by the communities' cultural entities. The material culture of Theyyam, with its vibrant colours and symbolism with meaning, is purely opened up, invested, and energised with rhythm in an organised traditional space.

As an enigmatic being, Theyyam endeavours to enact the established authority that constitutes the esoteric bonding which unifies each member of a certain community. Here, the relationship is between man and god, or between the natural and supernatural, and it is characterised by oppositions to physiological and physical symbols of transcendence. Theyyam emerged by reifying the human structure and transforming it into an enhanced moral overtone of ceremonial the values with colour and symbolism. Here, the human being is to be substituted with a more divine, mystical soul of god or goddess. There is an unambiguous line that delineates the colour and symbolism inside the tradition; the boundaries thus enclose the meaning.

This is how French philosopher Jean Baudrillard defines "traditional colour. “In the traditional system, colours have moral and psychological overtones. Tradition restricts colour to a parochial meaning of its own, with the strictest boundary line around it. Even in the freer ceremonial fashion, colours generally derive their significance outside themselves; they are simply metaphors for fixed cultural meaning.”[3]

Thus, understanding the colour and symbolism of Theyyam is analogous to decoding the cultural history of north Kerala, or also can say that, time-traveling back to its genesis time period. Because the artwork evolved through numerous stages, it also created several intricacies of the meaning of enhancement throughout the centuries through its colour and symbolism. Thus, studying colour and symbolism is of the utmost importance for all artworks, especially those with a long tradition and intricate intricacies accomplished throughout the course of time, because it provides a more complete image of the art work's consciousness and worldview. The present research examines at colour and symbolism as one of the most significant yet indisputable elements in folk-art traditions and also in sphere of Theyyam. Analysing by means of this lens is going to help in fostering the growth of aesthetic pleasure in the minds of arts viewers and raise it to a higher level. Especially in the case of colour, which makes the art form more vibrant and establishes psychological changes in the viewer's psyche, and captures their attention in order that individuals are able to perceive the artwork's abstract and metaphysical relevance. So, interpreting the colour of an artwork is one of the first steps in determining its real value, not only in terms of the physical entity but also in regards of its metaphysical side.

In other words, there is no existence of an artwork or folk-art form without aspects of the colour and symbolism.

[3] Jean, Baudrillard. *The System of Objects*. Translated by James Benedict, Verso, london, 2005, pp. 30-31.

1.2 Colour

Colour has been an integral aspect of humanity's cultural heritage from the beginning of time. It is the fundamental fragment of experience in visual perception that has guided their civilization, and it also influences their religious life, art, astrology, psychology, philosophy, scientific endeavours, and so on. Since prehistoric times, humankind have attempted to gain insight into the mystical qualities of this element and have brought up various interpretations of it. They take into account each hue as an auspicious entity, which played a role substantially to the development of their aesthetic concepts. Put differently, it could possibly be said that understanding the significance of colour and its inherent qualities paved the way for humanity's evolution towards a more advanced state of consciousness, an evolution that continues to this day. Philosophers have been attempting to figure out how humans perceive the world through specific combinations of colours since ancient times, which has led to some fascinating theories and imaginative pieces of work.

1.3 Greek theories on Perception of colour

Ancient Greek physicians believed that the eye was like a light surrounded by water through which humans could see. Despite their arbitrary and obscure nature, these ideas established a foundation for many subsequent ideas and investigations. Democritus and Empedocles, two pre-Socratic thinkers, briefly mention the eye's equivalent to the lantern. Empedocles is able to discern the perception notion of white and black using the lantern theory of the eye, but he is unable to propose the nature and properties of other hues and thus fails to provide colour theory. However, Democritus articulated it. He contends that the very existence of atoms is responsible for the distinctive nature, character, and perception of colour. As an outcome, he defined black and white hues as rough and smooth-surfaced atoms that comprise up it. The white hue is lustrous due to its smooth atoms. In the instance of the hue red, he says that its atoms are directly composed of fire or warmth. As consequently, the intermediate properties of these atoms determine the character of other hues. In

conclusion, Democritus attempts to argue that colour is the energy equation of an object itself.

Plato proposes an identical idea regarding colour perception, but instead of an atom, he proposes that an object emits colour rays that interact with the fire or light in the eye. Thus, he asserts that seeing or not seeing colours is determined by the speed and strength of rays emanating from an object. The process facilitated the perception of colour. The dynamic character of hues successfully strikes the eye, resulting in the Lambron effect and identifying the nature of colour. A scale is presented to describe the gradation in Lambron: melan for dark, leucon for white, and erythron for red. The least dynamic nature generates white, but the dynamic nature that produces less than white delivers no colour at all, exclusively black.

Aristotle, on the other hand, ruled out the flaming ray hypothesis that emerged from eyes and objects enabling colour perception, contending that if this were correct, daytime and night vision would be the same as light. He was more intrigued by another hypothesis, which proposes that a medium, such as air, water, or other translucent substances, is necessary between the eye and the object in order to perceive it. Light is an energy that manifests translucence in gradations ranging from bright to dark. When this reaches the eye, it illuminates the colour and, consequently, the character of the object. Although this process takes place in phases, the coloured object stimulates the medium, enabling the medium to transform to translucent; this translucent medium stimulates the eye, and the light stimulates all of the processes. According to Aristotle, colours are combinations of brightness and darkness, or black and white; hence, colour appears on an item while the black and white are superimposed according to the object's nature.

1.4 Issac Newton experiment on light spectrum

When Isaac Newton carried out a light spectrum experiment in late 1600, it became apparent that light is the primary reason human beings perceive

colour. He executed an experiment whereby he transmitted white light through a glass prism and refracted within it to obtain all seven colours of a rainbow, referred to as VIBGYOR (violet, indigo, green, yellow, orange, and red), or the visible spectrum that humans observe with the naked eye. This experiment demonstrates that white is not a distinctive colour; rather, it is generated by reflecting all of the colours at the same time. This experiment established that light is an electromagnetic wave with varying frequencies. The visible light spectrum has a certain wavelength with a unique frequency that enables us to sense colour in the brain via physiological processes in the eyes. Red has the highest wavelength but the fewest frequencies, whereas violet has the shortest wavelength but the highest frequencies in the visible spectrum. Because of the molecular features inherent in objects, some colour wavelengths absorb whereas others reflect, resulting in the object's colouration. When an object absorbs more colour, it appears progressively darker, and when it reflects more colour, it appears brighter. Likewise, a substance is visible to individuals as red because it absorbs every colour except red; the unabsorbed red colour is reflected outside, enabling us to see. According to research, the perceived colour in an individual's brain cells produces particular implications and excitation in the mind. In essence, colour has the ability to influence human psychology, which is the underlying influence of an artwork on the viewer's mind.

1.5 Colour and psychology

The psychologist L. M. Hurvich proposes that “colour is perceived not only by the effect on the photochemical event in the retina, a neural excitation process, or a psychical event in the individual's mind; rather, it is the reaction of all three processes." He also states that colour perception is often achieved by the interaction of physical light and an organism's visual system.” [4]

[4] Leo M, Hurvich. *Color Vision*. Sinauer Associates, 1981, p.13.

Kuehni proposes a similar notion, claiming that “colour is an experience, poetically speaking, a flower of our brain activity."[5] He additionally addresses colour perception through physical, physiological, psychological, and psychophysical processes. Perceived colour is a component of visual perception; each may be distinguished by specific colour names such as black, white, red, yellow, blue, green, orange, and so on.

After perception occur inside the brain, the impacts of colour on an individual's consciousness are entirely subjective. Reactions to colours in an individual's perception can be classified into three levels of approach: biological, personal, and cultural. The biologically human response to colour in many popular and scientific literatures suggests that the colour with a larger wavelength (mainly red) stimulates more than the shorter wavelength colours (mainly blue). The personal response to the colour is meaningless, yet the decision about the response to the colour is entirely dependent on the individual's own relationship with that colour. Because the cultural significance of a colour differs from culture to culture, an individual's psychological response to it will differ from his or her biological response. For instance, some cultures consider the colour blue to represent dullness and deterioration, while others consider it to represent happiness and growth.

Although most prior research on the biological reaction to colour is ambiguous and has a firm empirical foundation, it could possibly be argued that colours with longer wavelengths achieve more psychological excitement than colours with shorter wavelengths. In these cases, the colours are categorised into two groups: warm and cold. Individual colours, on the contrary, have largely ambiguous and perplexing impacts on people's mental states. So, there is only one method to comprehend the impacts of colour on an individual's mind: through cultural and personnel-experience-based responses to colour. Even the

[5] Rolf G, Kuehni. *Color, Essence and Logic*. Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, 1983, p.7.

current study on the colour and symbolism of performance traditions anticipates such knowledge for analysis.

Colour definitely shapes people's brains in a multitude of ways in all aspects of their life; it clearly has the power to influence and contribute to the mind's ability to execute tasks. Most of the time, the effects of colour on an individual's thinking are based on cultural beliefs about colour that are already embedded in the individual's social and cultural context. “From birth, every individual senses colour vividly in every second of vision, giving it a distinct meaning by connecting it to the experience of a scenario, concept, message, and so on. This frequent combination produces a persuasive connection, so that even slight interference with the colour in the situation stimulates the corresponding experience and influences cognition and behaviour.”[6] Thus, it states that once an individual's mind associates colour pairings with experience of scenario, concept, and message, the appropriate activation of cognition and conduct happens without conscious intended use. In simple terms, colour experience functions as a non-conscious principle or automatic function upon an individual's psyche whenever its association has been established. As an outcome, it is possible to conclude that colour cognition in humans is a learnt behaviour that evolves with experience. However, some research studies indicate that some colour connections constitute in human cognition during evolutionary ingrained preference inducements. The colour red, for example, is usually regarded as a symbol of danger and stimulates caution in an individual's mind. The explanation for this involves not only an individual's acquired conduct over their lifetime but rather innate cognition developed during the course of human evolution. For instance, the colour red carries a very primordial meaning for humans since it is the colour of blood, and it has always been associated with perilous conditions of pain and death since the dawn of

[6] Mark W, Baldwin., and Jennifer Meunier. "The Cued Activation of Attachment Relational Schemas." *Social Cognition*, vol. 17, no. 2, 1999, pp. 209–227.

awareness. Even when a wound occurs, the initial sensation is pain, which is a frightening signal of caution.

1.6 Red colour and Psychology

In the Theyyam performing art form, the performer applies predominantly red colour for face as mask and hence the psyche behind using red colour is imperative to cognate the symbolism behind such usage. Throughout history, human beings have had an affinity with the colour red. It has been seen as an essential colour in the human palette since the primordial stage of their existence, even before access to other colours in general. In the present day, the colour red and its gradation created from an excess of red are considered warm colours, or the warm gradient of the colour red. As previously pointed out, the colour gradation of red with increasing redness and its association with warmth can also be attributed to an inherent evolutionary feature of perception concerning it. For instance, the sun's redness, which generates warmth and heat, converts cool-colour-carrying material such as green leaves to redness or gradation during the drying process when it comes into contact with the sun's red light. Similarly, fire, with its warmth and redness, transforms things into red. Uncontrolled red colour substances, from blood to the hue of fire, have had the potential to generate a truly hazardous sensation in a human's brain since the beginning of consciousness. So, perhaps for this reason, the colour red stimulates the brain and engages an individual's focus more than any other hue.

According to some research, the colour red symbolises a psychological risk of failure, emphasising the probability of failure. At the present time, in a social setting, the colour red is employed to restrict events, activities, and objectives. Researchers believe that employing negative signals like red, which has a frightening likelihood, demotivates people to achieve an event, process, or objective in future attempts. For example, traffic signalling with red lights generates a strong urge to stop the vehicle's movement. Although colour has undoubtedly played an important role in the evolution of civilisations right up

to the present time, vision is the most sophisticated and significant psychophysiological process in a being. Each culture values a certain colour and considers it auspicious or noteworthy based on their personal experiences with it.

1.7 Colour symbolism and culture

The brilliant colour combinations in the environment have captivated humanity since the dawn of time. The inability to grasp the tangible essence of colour induced magic in their cognitive process, giving rise to the metaphorical world of colours. Thus, from the primordial era to the present, it has played an important role in mankind's psychological processes and evolution.

Similarly, colour played a substantial role in early Egyptian society. Egyptian art's very subjective interpretations are based on colour and its symbolism, allowing it to survive throughout the ages and into unknown nations around the globe. The hierarchical structure, religion, and literature of Egyptian societies are particularly represented and propagated through the distinctive colour and symbolism of the art of hieroglyphics and talismans. For instance, the use of golden colour in the decorative masks of Egyptian nobles and kings is represented by easy recognition in God’s eyes and a smooth path towards the afterlife. In a sense, the colours and hues have a noble cause and are important as languages in Egyptian cultures.

When it comes to Greek civilisation, colour symbolism is apparent in the representations of each deity and goddess. Athena is portrayed as wearing crimson robes. Purple represents Ulysses walking in the ocean. Ceres, on the other hand, finds the colour red poppy auspicious. A similar concept of associating a certain hue with the god is present in Buddhist thinking as well. Buddha's colour is golden or gold, and he wore crimson while contemplating human existence.

In Buddhist cosmogony, there is a mountain peak that serves as the centre and pinnacle of all spiritual, metaphysical, and even physical universes, named Sumeru, Sineru, Meru, and Mahameru. In the physical cosmos, it is the centre of the world with four cardinal points, and the sun and moon revolve around it. The north portion of Mount is made of gold and hued yellow; the south portion is made of lapis lazuli and hued blue; the east is made of crystal and hued white; and the western portion is made of ruby, which is hued red. Among Tibetan Buddhist beliefs, the Vajrayana mandala offerings often depict Meru as a representation of the whole universe and home to Buddha Cakrasamvara.

Here, we can observe that the colour development of meaning and identity occurs as a result of the collective conscious effort of the social structures and values possessed by individuals in the culture. Thus, the symbolic meaning of colours in a particular culture is mostly unique to that community.

1.8 Symbol

A human being always expresses himself through words and visuals. His philology is full of symbolism. Like colours, symbols are also significant elements in the life and cognition of human beings. A symbol can be described as a creative artwork created by artists, theorists, or authors that can be an image, concept, or idea that is common in everyday life but takes on additional meaning from its obvious fundamental connotations.

According to the context of Indian art, a symbol of anything cannot fit into one single meaning or reality; rather, it opens up a wide range of meaning with possibilities of imagination. Stella Kramrisch, the pioneer Indian art historian, says, "Indian plastic sense is averse to the symbol, which is the substitute for reality."[7] A meaning or symbol is something that is opened up and invested with interpretations of meaning and imaginations, rather than being a substitute for a single reality.

[7] Stella, Kramrisch. *Indian Sculpture: Ancient, Classical and Mediaeval*. Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, p.25.

Introduction

In a sense, a symbol may be anything, including abstract concepts, letters, pictures, activities, things, or locations, to express the core of anything that goes beyond a single literal meaning. "The content of the symbol—its significance, value, and meaning—is inherited from the core characteristic of the thing that it symbolises rather than the symbol itself. 'That is, the value or essence of the symbol does not lie directly on the concrete, obvious properties of the symbol; rather, it is superposed on these properties with the character that it symbolises. The symbol has no intrinsic casual connection with its meaning or the thing it symbolises; rather, its relationship is conventional and arbitrary.'[8] Because a symbol's meaning extends beyond its immediate and evident meaning, its essence will become completely unconscious, unable to be properly described. However, it required mediation in order to gain comprehension and exist inside a certain social system. Because the meaning and relevance of a symbol evolve with the evolution of a culture and its social structure, it can be mediated via these systems. In other words, a symbol's worth is conceptualised and managed such that it does not deviate from its usual and arbitrary link with social determination. When a symbol receives its mediation of meaning, it gains form and specificity within the constraints of social decision; otherwise, it will begin processing infinite meaning and become impossible to interpret. Thus, recognition and mediation within a certain social, cultural, or religious context are essential for the symbol to exist in a ritualistic setting.

Even though symbols are generated through acceptance in society, they are first conceptualised in the individual artist's mind and later adopted by the masses. However, for a symbol to be recognised in a socio-cultural context, it must have a distinct metaphorical and observable character. It can be an additional, essential, or required character of a symbol. This character influences how others see the thing it symbolises; it also allows the masses to

[8] Talcott, Parsons. *The Structure of Social Action: A Study in Social Theory with Special Reference to a Group of Recent European Writers*. The Free Press, Illinois, 1949, p. 416.

discern the core essence of it through understanding the inner attitude that it symbolises. Although, for a symbol to have an essential quality that it symbolised, it needed to participate and represent a particular reality. This engagement in reality allows for the development of a sense of essence, purpose, and worth. Thus, participation and representation are essential characteristics of a symbol in the reality it represents; it radiates and represents the essence of the reality it represents, and it transcends itself. Although these all characters are essential for a symbol to reflect the reality it persists, but ultimately symbols are beyond interpretation and meaning.

Religious symbolism, in its pure metaphysical, minimalistic conceptions of form, fundamentally establishes an interconnection between the profane world and ultimate consciousness. Religious symbolism is attained through costume and makeup in the case of performance or through differential colour toners in case of pictorial representation such as *Kalamezhuthu* (ritualistic floor drawing) in the backdrop of Kerala ritual art performances. Colour symbolism, in fact, acts as an alienation *i.e*., it creates a distance between the realms of physical and metaphysical which itself is a cultural construct of psyche. Since the understanding the whole meaning of existence and also attaining transcendence and thereby enlightenment are distinctive human qualities. This is the basic quest of all religions. Yet in many instances, this never occurs; rather, in reality, religious symbols contradict this ultimate idea and mediate what needed to be justly symbolised in the structured parameters of culture and the native spheres of a state. It is a concrete form; it deflects and contradicts the otherwise wide understanding of the ultimate reality, which is formed from the relationship between the profane world of existence and the ultimate consciousness. To attain this, they need to spread out and breathe the metaphysical symbols into their ultimate meaning and towards existence itself, rather than limiting or mediating the vast meaning of consciousness to a structured sphere of limited understanding.

However, an individual artist who develops symbols must go through metaphysical reasoning and transcendence in order to achieve natural symbolic

form. Nature here is a concentrated, sacred form of origin. In other words, knowledge about the entirety of existence and awareness allow one to envision a symbolic metaphysical image in order to attain the condensed nature of form. This metaphysical images or forms send symbolic nuances of the ultimate into the profane world. In a way, a metaphysical idol pervades the abyss of delusions about awareness and existence. A conceptualization happens when an artist creates a metaphysical image of a symbol. Conceptualization involves bridging the entity and substance of the unconscious with the conscious world of culture. According to the renowned anthropologist Cliford Geertz, “The symbol acts as a vehicle for conception; in the sense that to symbolise means to conceptualise.”[9] The process of conceptualising symbols always causes psychological alterations in the artist's psyche, an interplay between conscious and unconscious depths. This gives the symbol an ambiguous quality. To put it yet another way, creating symbols allows you to experience something beyond the conscious materialistic reality. The symbols are the result of limitations in comprehending the limitless consciousness of existence. The symbol originated when scientific and technical explanations of the materialistic world failed to encompass the vast existential reality.

Even in the case of the individual mind, there are huge limitations on the understanding of real-life phenomena. As a result, the mind creates symbols in the form of dreams to provide a hazy comprehension of these experiences. An individual's senses register information about reality in their minds, resulting in a psychological impact that is completely undefinable, as well as an unspecified number of undefinable occurrences. This event is caused by the conscious mind's subliminal activity, which sediments indefinable experiences in the unconscious depths of the mind itself. This form of sedimented perception later appears as a symbol in dreams, intuition, and introspective thoughts.

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[9] Clifford, Geertz. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. Basic Books, 1973, p. 91.

So, when an artist creates images spontaneously from nature or imagination, they will have a symbolic reflection of his indescribable sedimented unconscious thought in the first place. However, when it comes to community, ceremonial, and religious art, conscious thinking functions through the acceptability of the realm formed by the framework of certain religious rules. Its symbolism is based on the construction of its own sphere. However, it is sufficient to transmit the entire cosmic milieu's incomprehensible awareness in a metaphysical sense. It only occurs when it is perceived in a broad sense of consciousness, in the process of extending it out and depicting it without the constraints of the structural parameter. So, for a viewer, observing this symbolic element in religious icons gains reflection about the indescribable consciousness of the cosmos itself; it becomes a metaphysical experience of transcendence, which gives a glimpse of enlightenment. Thus, by the process of symbolism, the image or sculpture’s value and trait of consciousness about whole existence is symbolically crystallised in the form of an icon.

Similarly, in the art of Theyyam, professionals draw and sculpt the human body using a variety of symbolic combinations with ceremonial meaning. By infusing a human body with a symbol, the performer's body becomes accepted as the soul of divinity, resulting in the creation of an idol over the performer's body. Instead of sculpting in stone or modelling in other materials, the artist recognises divinity's presence over the living human body. The symbols on the performer's body hold historical and cultural significance for the region. It promotes intuitive and psychologically radical principles that bear a legacy over the body. Here, the symbolic aspects lead to detailed intricacies and a multidimensional realm of art. The symbolic, complicated pieces combine to form each Theyyam's distinctive icons, making it an object of adoration. It will function as a unique architype within the physical space or cultural sphere of its particular community.

1.9 Significance of study

This thesis attempts to answer the same question that humanity is currently facing: whether humanity's future development should continue to focus solely on technological or scientific development, or whether we should look more within ourselves as an organism capable of consciously analysing transcendence and thus elevating an enlightened lifestyle that is sustainable for the world.

Humanity has made significant technical and scientific advances in recent years, resulting in globalisation, foreign cultural intervention, and intermixing. This tendency is creating complex difficulties related to a divided cultural and social environment. Paradoxically, this great growth is juxtaposed with a variety of unpleasant experiences, including global warming, natural disasters, poverty, inter-national economic instability, the unprecedented magnitude of wealth accumulation in small communities, and individual isolation. The current expansion of global challenges in the technological and scientific spheres disregards human experiences and transpersonal insights. According to psychoanalyst Jung, "Mass that is happened to be the modern global society crushes out the individuals still possible insight and reflection."[10]

The current study regards Theyyam as a multidimensional art form that gives spiritual insight into communities and cultural identities, inevitably leading to balance and unity in community structure. It also examines how far the survival of the Theyyam tradition contributes to cultural stability without fragmentation, given that new media proliferation and hence globalisation are at their pinnacle. Theyyam, as a cultural identity, provides spiritual knowledge to their community members via their multidimensional art. Especially in the twenty-first century, when transcendental insight into the self and spiritual values are ignored or degraded in a context of an expanding worldwide battle of ideas, understanding folk-art forms like Theyyam from a strictly subjective perspective is critical.

[10] Carl G, Jung. *The Undiscovered Self*. Routledge, 2013, p.2.

Introduction

Psychologist Erich Fromm analyses human interaction in the twentieth century as follows: "Man in modern times is alienated from himself, others, and nature... Human beings' relationships became commodities; they experienced their life force as an investment. By providing many palliatives, our civilisation facilitates the people of its society to be unaware of this aloneness; the strict routine of mechanical work makes people unaware of their most fundamental human desires, of the longing for transcendence and unity."[11] Because Theyyam is a traditional art form, it closely adheres to its hereditary heritage of handing down every component of its art and material culture from generation to generation in order to maintain its creative, symbolic, and metaphorical spirit. The principles of environmental protection and a sustainable ecology, with the coexistence of nature and humanity, are still retained and infused in the art and production of Theyyam. Thus, learning the encoded codes of Theyyam through colour and symbolism contributes to the development of human insight and the creation of a more sustainable environment in the cultural landscape of north Kerala. Each Theyyam is a complex collection of separate creative objects or substances that bond to the body of the Theyyam practitioner in order to achieve transpersonal insight. In Baudrillard's view, 'the substances derived with the meaning that transmit through hereditary, which circumscribe as an object by the form, are bound to the human body as a same visceral intimacy that binds him to his organs by his own body.'[12] As previously stated, the traditional entity of Theyyam is more tied to ecology, as seen by its hue and symbolism, and serves to bond humanity to nature and the environment. Deciphering the artform of Theyyam with its deep symbolic structure would provide clarity in understanding the sustainable cultural and spiritual future based on a healthy ecology.

[11] Erich, Fromm. *The Art of Loving*. HarperCollins, 1956, p. 86.

[12] Jean, Baudrillard. *The System of Objects*. Translated by James Benedict, Verso, London, 2005, p.28.

Introduction

Though authors and researchers have previously examined Theyyam in a variety of disciplines, there are very few visual aesthetic approaches to material culture and the art of Theyyam. Even though Theyyam is a multidimensional folk-art tradition with various esoteric aspects that provide an open book of subjective thinking, relatively little research has been done regarding it. The invalidation of subjective analysis over symbolic meaning in folk-art is not a new scenario, mainly because of the intervention of the scientific paradigm, which mandates experimental truth with certain empiricism. This trend has not only happened in the local regional context in recent times, but it is a trend worldwide as well. Compliance and restriction with certain rules and formulations of the scientific temper are considered more significant than the individual's insight. Thus, in that case, this thesis is relevant in all dimensions of its art. The rejection of subjective analysis of symbolic meaning in folk art and other arts in favour of technology is not a new phenomenon. It was mostly due to the intrusion of the scientific paradigm, which demands only experimental truth with a certain empiricism. The trend is now apparent not just in local and regional contexts but also around the world. Compliance and obedience with established concepts articulated through scientific formulations are viewed as more significant than human intuition and imagination. It limits the mental process and philosophical transcendental insights to the least important circumstances. Thus, in such a case, the above argument applies to all components of the art more so to the art form of Theyyam in particular. Hence, the study is incomplete and imbalanced without the visual aesthetic and symbolistic aspects. Since the Theyyam is a completely multidimensional art form, the need for a study based on colour and symbolism is significant.

1.10 Nature and scope of study

The current research focuses on the visual aesthetics of Theyyam forms. It investigates the colour and symbolism of Theyyam art in relation to their myths and stories in order to decipher the psychological, folkloristic, historical, and anthropological perspectives on it. The thesis begins by categorising and

evaluating each piece of Theyyam's literature, as well as the intricate pattern, theme, symbols, and colours that serve as the foundation for the culture's collective psychology. It also focuses on the creation of socio-cultural identity via art and the dynamic it generates through the individual's psyche in each community and social group.

The study focuses on art forms that have profoundly ingrained cultural interpretations throughout their existence. As a result, it may lead to a solution to misinterpretations of meaning over time. Because the research is centred on colour and symbolism, numerous abstract notions of meaning inherent in history can be uncovered, providing fresh insight into the artwork's perspective. The development of unfolding meaning will also provide a thorough comprehension of a culture's aesthetic sense and worth, which are unaffected by other concepts. The study will also conduct a visual, semiotic-based analysis of the chosen forms of Theyyam to compare them to a broader range of historical contexts. Because the Theyyam's soul is based on a generation of multifaceted meanings from north Kerala and beyond, the research also provides insight into the historical migratory histories of other civilisations in this region. It will provide insight into the history of other cultures' merger with the Theyyam form. It is possible to identify the relationship between the symbolism of the other culture and the symbolism and colour of the Theyyam.

1.11 Geographical area of study

This research, mainly focusing on the northern part of Kerala, refers to a geographic area of southwest India covering the state of Kerala’s present-day Kannur and Kasaragod districts, the Mananthavady Taluk of Wayanad and Vadakara, and the Koyilandi Taluks of Kozhikode in Kerala. The northern section of Kerala, known as the Malabar area, includes these districts, which extend from Manjeshwaram in the north to Korapuzha in the south. These parts are the prominent regions still practicing Theyyam as a living cult and give an overall view of Theyyam with its culturally significant representations.

Therefore, the present study will focus on how the socio-cultural significance influences the formation of the colour and symbolism of Theyyam.

Fieldwork for primary data collecting was conducted mostly in Kannur, Kasargod, and a portion of Kozhikode districts (see the Figure 1.1 for map).

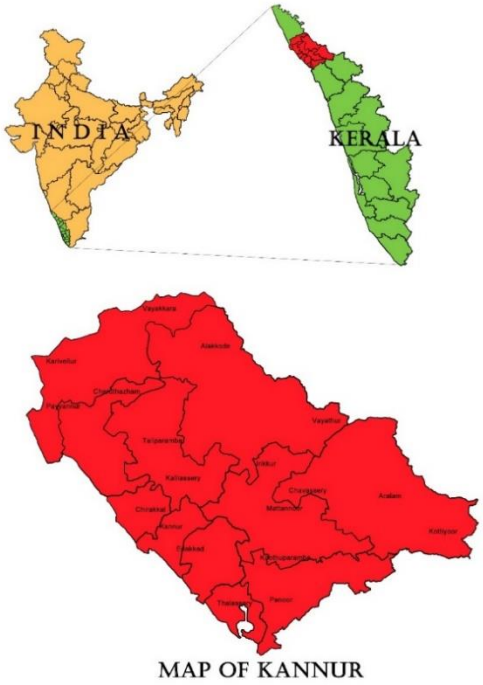

Figure 1.1: Map of Kannur District.

1.12 Survey on previous literature

The literature review focuses on ethnocultural, folkloric, anthropological, methodological, and theoretical literature. This is to examine the study from several perspectives to obtain fundamental information about the research issue, identify gaps, and build a specific theoretical framework that the research thesis demands. Books, articles, and research papers from numerous disciplines, such as art theories, art history, visual theories, folklore, folk art, psychoanalysis, anthropology, ethnocultural studies, and so on, have been collected and researched to get a comprehensive understanding. The research also looks at governmental and non-governmental data sources such as archives, reviews, reports, and documents. The literature described above is categorised into following three broad areas.

Introduction

1. Literature on theoretical work in art history, folklore, folk art, anthropology, psychology, visual art, art aesthetics, and culture.
2. Literature on Theyyam performance and Theyyattam.
3. Literature on vernacular studies of Theyyam performance.

1.12.1. Literature on theoretical work in art history, folklore, visual art:

Daniel Chandler.[13] This is a semiotics field guide that offers a fair and impartial overview of semiotics researchers' works, such as Peirce, Derrida, Saussure, Umberto Eco, Lacan, Foucault, and Barthes. The author analyses the link between semiotics and structuralism. Furthermore, the book offers a thorough strategy that emphasises the Saussurean tradition, which is used in a variety of disciplines such as literature, sociology, linguistics, photography, music, visual arts, fashion, folklore, psychology, and more. Chandler additionally provides an extensive indexical list of semiotics-related works, such as law, music, television, cinema, and so on, by demonstrating numerous researchers' works. According to the book's preface, Chandler states that "this book demystifies a complicated, multidisciplinary area and answers crucial concerns, such as: What is a sign? How will semiotics be applied in textual analysis? What codes do we take for granted? What is text? How significant are scholars like Saussure, Pierce, and Jackobson?

Christopher Tilley.[14] The handbook compiles critical surveys of theoretical, conceptual, and argued intellectuals from conventional study and subject object disciplines for evaluating the material world. This book examines material culture and attempts to determine the association between regional, economic, and political characteristics. It has been organised into five significant subsections. The first and primary portion discusses the theoretical and conceptual framework of material culture studies. The following step in the

[13] Daniel, Chandler. *Semiotics: The Basics*. Routledge, London, England, 2007.
[14] Christopher, Tilley, et al. *Handbook of Material Culture*. SAGE, 2006.

second section highlights the correlation of the human body and senses to cultural materials, as the vast majority of material culture is a manifestation of the human course of action. The next section discusses the subject-object relationship, emphasising things such as architecture, interior design, landscapes, apparel, and art. The fourth section continues with a discussion of processes and transformations. It examines production, consumption, and trade, as well as how commoditization drives material culture development. The final portion, addresses contemporary politics and presentation. It expresses the tensions for the preservation of manners and material culture, which will result in the identity, tradition, and heritage of the society. Finally, the book emphasises that material culture is more than solely a study of objects and physical culture, but also a reflection of cultural disparities between society and people.

John Lechte.[15] The book is a key guide to the most influential critical thoughts by key thinkers of the twenty-first century, with a special emphasis on structuralism, phenomenology, post-structuralism, semiotics, second-generation feminist ideas, post-Marxism, modernity, postmodernity, and post-humanist thinking. The volumes provide valuable insight into structuralist thought and contribute to current studies on the theoretical elements of semiotics and structuralist thinking.

Karel Werner.[16] The book presents a comprehensive, methodical examination of symbolism in art and religion. The book is organised into ten chapters, each authored by an independent writer. Glyn Richards' chapters on symbolism and religious language establish a foundation for understanding the link between symbolism and religious language. In the chapter, the author considers symbolism as a structural part of religion, examining the intrinsic strength and character required for a symbol to be accepted in a social circle or society. He establishes this view by describing symbolism in general. Acceptance of a

[15] John, Lechte. *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: From Structuralism to Post-Humanism*. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2007.
[16] Glyn, Richards, et al. *Symbols in Art and Religion: The Indian and the Comparative Perspectives*. Edited by Karel Werner, Motilal banararsidass, Delhi, 1991.

symbol in a social circle is achieved through its mediation by a representation of something in the community. The author adopts a radical approach to the use of symbolism in religious language, claiming that religious language cannot be interpreted literally but rather analogically. The chapter concludes with a discussion of symbolism's psychological benefits and the relationship between religion and symbols. The other part examines the symbolism of Indian art traditions, with a focus on Hindu and Buddhist religions in general. These chapters examine the symbolism of this religion, which provides mediation and generates an experience of a transcendental being in people.

Carl Gustav Jung.[17] The majority of the book is on how human minds may construct symbols from daily events. According to Jung, the unconscious mind's activities play a significant part in the generation of symbols. He claims that the conscious mind's neglected concepts and visualisations sublimated in the unconscious and finally manifested as symbols in dreams. As a result, dreams are thought to be the major instrument for deciphering symbols. Jung argues that creative ideas and thinking processes ultimately stem from concepts that are unable to breach the conscious mind's threshold and are sedimented in the unconscious by the subliminal psyche. Jung also defines symbolism as a manifestation of spontaneous and natural processes that continue to convey something other than clear and immediate meaning. Furthermore, the significance of the symbols is explained in the context of a collective culture, which is mostly based on religious imagery and symbolism. The author's subsequent argument centres on archetypal dream symbolism. He refers to this as the tendency of dreams to take on primal motifs and images. He asserts that archetype is a dynamic component rather than a static pattern, in which the images and motifs change in detail but the basic primordial character exists within the pattern. Archetypes occur when impulses strike unexpectedly, resulting in the generation of religions, myths, and ideologies that define historical periods.

[17] Carl G, Jung. *Man and His Symbols: By Carl G. Jung and Others*. Dell, 1964.

Introduction

Victor Turner.[18] This anthology explores ritual and symbolism among the Ndembu people in Zambia, Central Africa. It provides a comprehensive account of male initiation and presents most of Professor Turner's published research on religion. The book presents thought-provoking hypotheses on ritual behaviour and symbolism using rich data. It complements previous descriptions of the Ndembu social structure and is expected to become an anthropological classic. Turner explores the long-lasting impact of symbols on moral ideal development and the relationship between symbolic behaviour, ideology, and social interaction issues. He identifies the ambiguity of symbols and their ritual conduct, referred to as polarisation, which generates sensory and ideological features while compressing and merging unique conceptions. Turner explains this by highlighting universal psycho-physiological mechanisms experienced during socialisation and ideation phases. According to him, men's appetitive and sensory traits have been restrained by civilisation, allowing psycho-physiological energy to manifest through symbolic activities within socially acceptable bounds. As a result, the moral code is stimulated by sensual cues and libidinous desires while restraining negative impulses within reasonable bounds. These suppressed expressions further explain the cathartic advantages of rituals. According to a model similar to that of Levi-Strauss's present research, the artifice of culture and ritual both supports and constrains chaotic, natural man; however, Turner's views follow Christian and Freudian paths, focusing on symbols as representations of forces. Both view symbols as connecting natural and cultural components. Levi-Strauss is less advanced psychologically but does not recognise the logical and formal aspects shared by all symbolic systems. Although we lack a comprehensive explanation of Ndembu cosmology and its relationship to these symbolic sub-systems, we possess an excellent description of the intricate functioning of Ndembu symbols inside specific ritual domains of action.

[18] Victor W, Turner. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Cornell UP, 1967.

1.12.2. Literature on Theyyam performance and Theyyattam

Dilip. M. Menon.[19] The chapter focuses on the disadvantaged caste's opposition and defence against the upper caste's oppressive authority through the employment of Theyyattam. The author describes Theyyattam as a place where the victim of wrongful death due to caste infringements is deified in order to condemn and prevent further immoral, unjustifiable rule over inferior identities. The chapter has been divided into five parts. The first section briefly covers the topography of north Malabar and the power hierarchy in society, with a focus on landholder groups and serfs. The second section discusses the diverse popular cultures of disadvantaged caste people, their beliefs, and the eventual emergence of Theyyam due to numerous factors. The next section reveals the numerous interpretations within the study of Theyyam. The fourth part explores the relationship between opposing factions and the scriptures of Theyyam. The last and fifth portions examine the historical reasons behind Theyyam's collapse.

Dr. K. K. N. Kurup.[20] The book focuses mostly on hero worship in Theyyam folk dances from the north Kerala location, known as Kolathunadu. The book has been divided into two sections. Part, one focuses on the Theyyam cult and the hero worship practice. It begins with the ancient custom of hero worship, which led to the formation of Theyyam during the Sangam era. The author provides useful views on its evolution. subsequently also included information on the transformation of Stanam or Shrine architecture into the history of the Theyyam progression. This section also discusses the impressions and contributions of various religious groups, including Jain and Brahminical. This section specifically mentions the preservation of Theyyam by native and ancient communities such as the Velan, Malayan, and Vannan people. Finally, the author

[19] Dilip M, Menon. *"The Moral Community of the Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar." Studies in History 9, no.2*, New Delhi, Sage Publication, 1993, pp. 209-217.

[20] K. K. N, Kurup. *The Cult of Teyyam and Hero Worship in Kerala.* Indian Publications, 1973.

briefly discussed Theyyam's apparel and make-up, as well as aspects of their material culture, such as musical instruments and ceremonial paraphernalia. The second section focuses on case studies of chosen hero-worship traditions, which provide a brief explanation of the stories and myths surrounding heroes' deification.

Wayne Ashley.[21] It discusses the meticulous investigation of the Theyyam kettu, which is the process for making Theyyams. The primary analysis of the undertaking depends on the performance of the Theyyam specialist. The work focuses mostly on the performance component. Furthermore, it analyses the visual topography by taking into consideration the performance specifics and the process of production by Theyyam experts. It offers a variety of cultural artefacts and material culture that demonstrate the meaning and function of ritual.

1.12.3. Literature on vernacular studies of Theyyam performance.

Dr. Y. V. Kannan.[22] The book focuses on the Vannan community's Theyyam and ritualist ceremonies. The volumes begin with an explanation of who the Theyyam performers are, what the prerequisites are for becoming a Theyyam performer, and how all communities conduct Theyyam as a tradition. Furthermore, the book focuses on Theyyam's unique group, the Vannan community. The author discusses the socio-cultural state of the Vannan community. In terms of socio-cultural status, the Vannan groups' origins, ceremonial importance, rites and traditions, and hereditary occupation are all thoroughly discussed. The author goes on to detail the Vannan villages' distinctive Theyyams, as well as their ceremonies and traditions, in subsequent

[21] Wayne, Ashley. "*The Theyyam Kettu of Northern Kerala*." *The Drama Review*, Southeast Asia Issue, 1979, pp. 99-112.

[22] Y. V, Kannan. *Theyyangalum Anushtananalum oru Padanam*. 2nd ed., State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2014.

chapters. The following chapter provides a broad overview of Theyyams and its socio-cultural development in north Kerala.

Chandran Muttath.[23] The book essentially focuses on Theyyam *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing). The book begins by investigating the origins of Theyyam, suggesting that it is an entity that evokes memories of the cultural past. According to the writers, the Theyyam is a key aspect of ancient culture's nature worship, with the goal of curing sickness and gaining prosperity via food production and collecting. Essentially, traditional festivities like Theyyam are used to strengthen relationships with nature, animals, the sky, and resources. According to the author, the shape, form, and colour are derived from nature; nature and Theyyam represent the many feelings of the same deity. *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) in Theyyam are created using symbolic portrayals of natural items passed down through generations through hereditary knowledge. This procedure provides several forms and variations of the same deity's *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing). The use of five hues, including red, white, black, yellow, and green, is obviously taken from natural materials. The book also provides in-depth information about the numerous *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) and their use of colour patterns. It also explores the psychological qualities of colour and how it affects people's thinking.

1.13 Lacunae in previous literature

According to previous research, the majority of studies focus on the literature and performance elements that comprise Theyyam, which encompass historical, political, social, and socioeconomic themes in general. Even though some earlier research on material culture has been acknowledged, the vast majority of these studies do not go thoroughly into the wider implications of aesthetic and visual learning. These research investigations do not cover visual learning for deciphering hidden meanings in social and historical contexts.

[23] Chandran, Muttathu. *Thattum Dalam*. State Institute of Languages, Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 2008.

These are peripheral studies of Theyyam's material cultural characteristics, with inadequate investigation into an appropriate psychoanalytical approach and the link of the community's psychology to it. Consequentially, these studies frequently lack a clear grasp of communities' collective and individual subconscious mental processes. It was also unsuccessful to completely appreciate the comprehensive meaning handed down by material culture symbolism, which provides insight on the long-lost relationship between literature and the visual art of the Theyyam performance.

The majority of prior studies have given less importance to in-depth approach for determining the connection between the historical, political, social, and socioeconomic components of material culture, as well as colour and symbolic characteristics. These investigations did not give much attention for providing a deeper knowledge of the evolution of Theyyam, each community's worldview, the evolution of lifestyle and employment, as well as the artistic and cultural factors associated with aesthetic elements.

1.14 Hypothesis

Overall, the research on Theyyam revealed the ceremonial relevance of the art form to the participating community, as well as its ethos of expressing solidarity via performance. It is a well-known fact that Theyyam as an art form is strongly associated with Kerala inside the nation, and when projected to the rest of the globe (UNESCO), it gains the status of an Indian art form.

However, the art form Theyyam is predominantly decorated with a distinct *mukathezhuthu* (facial painting), *mekhezhuthu* (bodily drawing), *mudi* (headgear), face mask, and *anilayalam* (costumes and decorations); few studies have focused on this topic. The theory hypothesises that colour symbolism is the archetypal element in art that connects the transcendental features of societies to the universe and the metaphysical realm. The community-specific aspect of each Theyyam and its literature is responsible not only for the formation of distinct colours and symbols with designs and intricate patterns but

also for establishing a divine environment in which the performers can honour their deities.

1.15 Theoretical frame work

The current research, Colour and Symbolism of the Performance Tradition of North Kerala, is primarily concerned with the Theyyam tradition's visual aesthetic value. To analyse and study it (which has a distinct ethnogeography), numerous methodologies are used, including the ecological and evolutionary aspects of the Theyyam tradition based on visual semiotics, which is the primary focus of the research.

Semiotics

Semiotics is the science that studies “the life of signs within society,”[24] coined by the leading name of this general science, Ferdinand de Saussure. He articulates it as part of social psychology, subsequently general psychology, and names it semiology (from the Greek word semeîon, "sign"). Saussure emphasises the exploration of linguistic signs in social institutions. Even though language is the fundamental aspect of sign creation and communication, he asserts that linguistics is simply a branch of the more extensive science of semiology. Ferdinand de Saussure not only became the founder of linguistics but of semiotics as well.

Except for him, another noteworthy thinker who contributed to the initial establishment of semiotics was American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. Saussure's tradition of sign science is known as semiology, whereas Peirce's tradition is renowned as semiotics. In the present day, the concept of semiotics is frequently employed as a reference to the whole domain. Pierce describes semiotics as a formal theory of signs that is inextricably associated with logic. For him, a sign is any representation that conveys something to someone in a certain capacity. Thus, according to him, “every thought is a

[24] Ferdinand D, Saussure. *Course in General Linguistics*. pdf, New York Philosophical Library, 1986.

sign."[25] In semiotics, "sign" encompasses not solely words and language but also images, objects, and gestures. Pierce emphasises that those items have no intrinsic meaning and only function as signs once comprehended. The crucial model of explanation over sign was designed by these two pioneers of this very science. The linguist Ferdinand de Saussure modelled a dyadic or two-phase structure, and the philosopher Charles Sanders Pierce established a triadic model.

According to Saussure's explanation, a sign is formed by the correlation of signified and signifier, and the correlation between them is the signification. Thus, signified is the concept, but signifier is the sound pattern or the utterance of the word. Since this explanation is purely linguistic, Saussure's sign is solely abstract or immaterial. In general, there is no specific, intrinsic, direct, or inevitable link between signified and signifier. By emphasising the arbitrariness of the link between signified and signifier, Saussure, consequently, establishes the arbitrariness of the sign as well.

The arbitrariness of linguistic signs is not a new concept; Aristotle already noticed this and mentioned that "there is no natural connection between the thing signified and the sound of any language."[26] In Cratylus, Plato's dialogues, he states that Herodotus advised Socrates that if you give a thing a name, it will become its actual name, and if you change the name to another, the former will not become less correct than the current one, or vice versa. Although the arbitrariness of language was recognised and acknowledged prior to Saussure, the distinction he made can possibly be regarded as a novel method and original thought. Saussure also mentions that arbitrariness exists in the sign of a single alphabet in writing. For example, the letter that represents a language is independent of the sound it generates. The arbitrary nature of signs in linguistic systems is the fundamental character and initial principle of language.

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[25] Charles S, Peirce, and Arthur W. Burks. *Collected Papers*. Edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 1931, quoted by Daniel, Chandler. *Semiotics for Beginners*. 2005.

[26] Ibid, also see in Ivor A, Richards. *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*. 2001, p-32.

The arbitrary nature and concept were essential since they demonstrated language's sovereignty over reality. It implies that language is the creation of reality rather than a reflection of it.

However, this does not mean that language is completely arbitrary, which it is not. Even Saussure made an exception to this. When a linguistic sign in any language becomes completely arbitrary, the system collapses, and the function of communication gets destroyed. This is why Saussure later changed his position, arguing that signs may appear arbitrary but not entirely. It should also be emphasised that, while the signified and signifier connections remain ontologically arbitrary, it makes no difference in the philosophical status of things if we substitute what we term white with black and vice versa.

It signifies that the system as a whole is not socially or historically arbitrary. For example, in the case of traffic lights, the choice of red is not wholly arbitrary because it conveys an inherent sense of danger. This is because the basic essence of the colour red has historically been carried out and experienced in a certain way in the present context. As a result, the colour red radiates its historically carried-out intrinsic essence into the mind of the spectator.

Charles Sanders Pierce

Pierce's formulation of the sign differs from Saussure's. He created his own semiotic model as well as taxonomies of signs. This concept of sign, with its several taxonomies, is essential for visual semiotics research. Pierce’s interest was in the triadic model sign, which is made up of "representamen," "interpretant,” and "object,” as well as instances of firstness, secondness, and thirdness, respectively. Representamen is the thing or form to which a sign refers; it may be a phoneme, a word, an epic, a song, a colour, or a garment; an interpretant is the sense that generates the sign, or, as Pierce defines it, anything that specifies something; and an object is to which a sign refers. Representamen is the thing or form to which a sign refers; it may be a phoneme, a word, an epic, a song, a colour, or a garment; an interpretant is the sense that generates the sign, or, as Pierce defines it, anything that specifies something; and an object is

to which a sign refers. Pierce describes the relationship between representamen, interpretant, and object as semiotics.

Pierce's "representamen" and "interpretant" have meanings that are equivalent to Saussure's signifier and signified. Yet, the "interpretant" is not the same as the signified; it is itself a sign. As previously stated, an equivalent sign appears in the mind of a person or somebody, or a more established sign, which leads to a succession of subsequent interpretants. Umberto Eco describes this as "unlimited semiosis." Pierce's approach to sign modelling is more philosophical and psychological in structure; he stated that the process of thinking in the mind is dialogue-like and that we are appealing to our inner selves for consensus. These concepts evolved into forms that may be seen later in Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories.

Considering that the present research focuses on the visual aesthetic of folk-art material culture, Theyyam, it necessitates a thorough examination of visual features such as symbols and iconography. Thus, the Peircean model of study is far more practical to rely on because it also allows for objective reality, whereas Saussure's model does not. Saussure's paradigm is reinforced by the arbitrary nature of the sign, although he does not provide a sign typology. Charles Pierce taxonomies allow for the development of several typologies based on different groupings and subgroups. Pierce identified three primary modalities of sign: symbol, icon, and index.

Symbol or Symbolic

A symbol is the kind in which the signifier has no relationship to the signified and is fundamentally conventional and arbitrary. It needs a sign interpreter to comprehend the code within it. The relationship between a symbol and its object is associated with the idea of a symbol. It is ascribed because the concept of an interpreter is confusing for the sign itself, even if the symbol may still be comprehended without one. A symbol is basically culturally constricted; the main example of this is the language, which is constrained by its cultural

structures, alphabets, and words in general. Other examples are numerals and colours, which also include cultural codes.

Icon or iconic

Icons are those in which the signifier appears to be mimicking or bearing a striking likeness to the signified. Most of the time, signifiers will be recognisably comparable in terms of viewing, perceiving, hearing, smelling, or tasting; in other words, signifiers will have the same characteristic of being signified or be factually similar. Onomatopoeia, imitative gesture, metaphors, and portrait sketching are some of the most common examples.

Index or Indexical

The index is the kind in which the signifier is not arbitrary and, in certain cases, perfectly imitates the signified. It is also possible to argue that the relationship between signifier and signified is casually or physically comparable in some way that may be inferred or observed. A gloomy day, thunder, fire, flavours, smells, and so on are good examples of natural signs.

Structuralism

It is quite difficult to define structuralism in terms of basic ideas. But, in essence, intellectuals believe that comprehending the nature of things is impossible in isolation; rather, it must be understood within the context of the greater structure of which they are a part. Structuralist thinkers investigate the fundamental structure that underpins a phenomenon's peripheral characteristics. The roots of structuralism may be traced back to the writings of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), who founded not just linguistics but also semiotics. Later, it began as an intellectual movement in 1950 in France with the works of anthropologist Claud Levi Strauss (1908–), psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), literary critic Roland Barthes (1915–1988), and Algirdas Julien Greimas (1917–1992). In the 1970s, the idea of structuralism had a wide-spread influence in Britain's intellectual world, and it even gained notoriety in the 1980s.

Introduction

Structure refers to our distinctive method of observing the environment and coordinating the perceived experience instead of the previously existing external objective elements. It is based on the premise that a thing's significance and value are not contained inside its essence or core but rather reside outside of it. The human mind assigns meaning to objects, and as a result, meaning is always a defining feature of things. However, meaning is not contained in objects. It means that when a structuralist approaches a thing or phenomenon from a distance to a bigger, more abstract reality about it, there is always a continuing parallel pull away from the closer truth and towards a larger abstract structure that incorporates the thing.

Structuralism aroused controversy when it first arrived in Britain and America in 1970. Because intellectuals in these regions have little regard for the exploration of deep structure, longer abstracts include literary subjects that structuralists are interested in. The Cambridge Revolution of the 1920s supported only the opposite of this viewpoint. It guided a more focused approach to the text-based study, avoiding broad inquiries and abstract concerns. Structuralism undervalued many already-persisted conceptions that have been dear to the English language for half a century and began debating repressed issues that conventional critics never wanted to hear: 'How does narrative work?' 'What is poetic structure?'. As a crucial figure, Ferdinand Saussure implanted all of these ideas into theoretical dimensions, providing new perspectives into the realm of literature and language in general.

Structuralism and Saussure

In the nineteenth century, linguistic theorists were primarily interested in the historical development of language and debated theories about its genesis in the language domain. Saussure thinking results in a varied pace of comprehension about the study of languages in general. He focused on the pattern and function of language in present usage, with a focus on how meaning is generated and preserved through grammatical structure. Even though these aspects of the approach established it as a structural theory, Saussure's particular

remarks on language research qualified him as a founder member of structuralism. These particular remarks are that the words we use to describe something have no intrinsic relationship to one another; in other words, they are unmotivated signs. That is, the meaning we assign to a word is arbitrary, and these meanings are maintained by conventional concepts. For example, the term 'rain' is independent of its meaning, and all language signals operate in this manner as arbitrary. Claiming linguistic signs as arbitrary is not a new argument, and Plato made it clear from ancient Greek times onward.

According to the second statement, which is as simple as we use in our day-to-day sentence-making, the meaning of words is relational, which means that the precise definition of a word is determined through the position of adjoining words in the paradigmatic chain, and no single word can be described in isolation.

The third declaration language is constitutive, which implies that it does not name or record anything; rather, it establishes and expresses the meaning of objects in the human mind. Language is not a mirror of reality; the terminology used is strictly linguistic. Language is more than just naming things; it is about establishing realities. Colour words, for example, are linguistic constructs of reality. Because, while we know from language that the colour spectrum is split into seven fundamental colours, this is not the case in reality. There is no formal split into individual hue names. The same is true for seasons throughout the year. We have four different names for seasons, yet there is no discernible shift or break between them; it is simply a passage of time.

These concepts regarding language, arbitrariness, relational thinking, and constitutive thinking inspired structuralist thought in a variety of domains. This provided insight into the model system, which is a self-contained, larger structure formed by the interactions of individual items with one another. Aside from all of Saussure's assertions, one more distinction he made contributed to a structuralist method of thinking: the use of langue and parole to signify language and utterance, respectively.

Dynamics of Structuralism

Although Saussure initially proposed structuralist thinking in linguistic language domains, it never limited itself to defining literature. In the late 1950s, structuralist philosophers identified Saussure's writings as the foundation of structuralism and applied the concept of how language works to other facets of signifying systems. As previously pointed out, anthropologist Levi Strauss adopted structuralist thought in explaining myth. According to his findings in a cycle of myth, the individual tale or parole is understood solely by evaluating its location in the entirety of the cycle, or the "langue," as well as the contrasts and similarities with other tales in the system; hence, it lacks a distinct intrinsic meaning.

The structuralist emphasises the importance of the relationships between paradigmatic oppositions. Semioticians' primary analytical technique is to identify semantic polarities or binary opposites in literature or signifying activities, such as female and male, private and public, and us and them. Such a technique takes the shape of dualism.

Dualism, for instance, is the fundamental basis for categorising and conceptualising human development. According to Halle and Jakobson's observations, binary opposition is the first phase in a child's logical journey. Even at the most fundamental level of human life, distinguishing between binaries is essential. Understanding dominance and submission, the differences between our species and other animals, sexual accessibility and its lack, and what is edible and what is not. There is no order as binary opposite in 'nature' since humans created it; the dynamic complexities of nature are generated to be an order through the implementation of binary opposite in cultural endeavours. Because language supports human growth in categorization, the spectrum of distinctions has expanded considerably beyond what was previously shared with other species. According to anthropologist Edmund Leach, there is most likely a differentiation between "I" and "Other" among monkeys that cannot talk, as well as an extended form of "we" or "they." However, the evolved

version, which is "man," "god," or, as we might say, "natural" or "supernatural," can only be achieved by language. In the structuralist approach to interpreting myth, Levi Strauss employed individual tales, and the cycle of which they are part is reconstituted as basic oppositions.

1.16 Aims and objectives

- The study's goal is to examine the Theyyams and typologically describe them based on their visual elements, which include colour and symbolism.
- The research will examine the particular Theyyam and its artefact through the lenses of structuralism and visual semiotics in order to comprehend the cultural understanding obtained by the communities of north Kerala.
- The study also aims to interpret the hidden or lost meanings of Theyyam, as expressed by its symbolic pattern and colour. This will provide a better understanding of their aesthetic preferences.
- The study will look at the relationship between a certain colour, a symbolic pattern, and its mythology.
- The research tries to identify the cultural progress and devolution of Theyyam by studying visual components, materials, and their comparable usage.

1.17 Methodology

Particular methodologies should be used to conduct research in a methodical and positive manner. This will help achieve the intended outcome from the previously described goals and objectives. Methodology is a scientific approach to a phenomenon or study topic that involves collecting data from both primary and secondary sources. There are two types of data sources: primary and secondary.

Primary sources of data

It is the primary source of data derived from firsthand evidence from the field or researchers' direct interactions with the phenomena. It entails gathering information from the artform's specialists and artisans on all elements of the artefact and mentifact, including material culture, rituals, connected mythology, folklore, and direct recording through interviews with the specialist, artist, and community leader. The current study also included a thorough examination of symbolic and iconic components from the artform's ritual materials and material culture. These data are acquired initially by direct observation and drawings of the artform and individual artefacts, as well as symbolic patterns, and then through pictures, videography, audios, and interview notes.

Secondary sources of data

It is the type of data gathered from previously published or unpublished sources, such as books, articles, publications, journals, magazines, reports, catalogues, theses, government records, survey reports, and so on. It also includes previously documented movies, pictures, and audio clips relating to the art genre.

1.18 Field Methodology

The current research gathers data employing two methods: (a) the quantitative method and (b) the qualitative method. Multiple approaches were used in the research to interpret the gathered data, including the following:

Quantitative research is a systematic approach that uses mathematics and statistical analysis to explore social issues while assuring validity, reliability, subjectivity, and objectivity using numerical data and surveys.

A qualitative approach is an interpretative process that achieves the intended result by analysing, decoding, translating, and explaining the collected data and social events. The qualitative approach is significant in the current study since it helps to interpret the actual importance of the phenomena. In this study,

qualitative data is collected specifically to define and describe the different Theyyam. The many Theyyams are grouped based on similarities and contrasts in visual appearances, material culture utilisation, colour, symbolic patterns, and overall structural appearances. The following are some of the tools employed in this study to attain its goals:

Observation methods

The present work, on the colour and symbolism of Theyyam, emphasises the need to pay close attention to the visual aspect. Because material culture produces a lot of visual aesthetics through the symbolic pattern and colour structure of the artform, careful observation is required to understand the social-cultural relationship of the artform. This method allows researchers to become more deeply immersed in the phenomenon or subject in order to obtain the desired results. The observation technique is separated into two categories based on the researcher's involvement: participation and non-participation.

Participation observation methods

The participation method of observation refers to the direct engagement of observers or researchers in the undertaking field. The participant's direct engagement in the phenomenon is conducted in order to observe substantial proof and gain in-depth experience with it. The present investigation demands decoding and examining an extensive number of symbolic patterns and iconic forms. Thus, the technique is used to decode the "work of art" by participating in its creation. It can also be done by copying the drawing while the specialist or artisan develops the artwork. As a result, the researcher will be able to produce a better explanation of the artist's and the artwork's experiences.

Non participation observation methods

The non-participation observation method is used to establish conclusions without the researcher's direct presence in the field. In this approach, the researcher is expected to observe a phenomenon without upsetting

it by participating in it; instead, observation is used to record data using audio-visual modalities.

Ethnographic methods

An ethnographic study is a type of research in which the researcher conducts a systematic analysis of a certain ethnographic group or community in a specific geographical area of location. The researcher undertakes the research with as much information as possible and meticulous fieldwork, personally witnessing the community's cultural and social occurrences. It is a two-sided study that examines both the community and the investigator's perspective. The technique is used to get a comprehensive understanding of the community, including its culture, worldview, and the relationships and effects of other civilisations.

The ethnographic study analysis will be beneficial in developing and gathering more comprehensive knowledge of the current research on Theyyam communities and their relationship to colour and symbolism. The approach is mostly used through the means used to document the phenomena, such as writing notes, recording audio or video, and taking photographs. It is an empirical method that seeks to comprehend life from a community's holistic perspective. Theyyam is closely tied to north Kerala culture since it is a tradition that conveys its texts, symbols, and colours to future generations through oral transmission. Deciphering the meaning of Theyyam's art works would help us understand the culture and history of north Kerala. The method can be implemented from two distinct ethnographic perspectives: 'emic' and 'etic'. The 'emic' perspective interprets the culture as an insider view, whereas the 'etic' perspective interprets it as an outsider one. The approach may be used with either the participation or non-participation observation methods.

Triangulation:

The triangulation approach enables researchers to substantiate their findings by cross-checking two or more sources, such as hypotheses, opinions,

and facts, in order to gain a dialectic of learning about the subjects under investigation. The primary goal of this approach is to confirm the validity of the study by examining numerous facets of the same social phenomena; it will also provide access to the quality of the data without prejudice. In the current study of colour and symbolism, triangulation is critical for obtaining high-quality data on the meanings and metaphors of cultural items. The research is going to evaluate the data collected on colour and symbolism from a variety of perspectives, including assumptions generated from observation, actual accessible information about the thing, and the respondent's knowledge regarding the topics under examination. This allows researchers to easily develop a valid judgement regarding the information at hand.

Interviewing

Interviews are conducted in order to obtain qualitative information and data regarding a source or phenomenon. It is mostly done through conversation with the individuals or through an exchange of questions and responses, in which the researcher seeks to clear up any confusion or specifics concerning the phenomena. It is one of the most important techniques for gathering information about a source or event and offering straightforward answers as first-hand information. Interviewing allows academics to acquire a unique viewpoint about the phenomenon from the native community itself. It features specific information about the people, their way of thinking, lifestyle, and worldview.

For gathering qualitative data for the present investigation, several interview methodologies, such as unstructured, structured, and semi-structured formats, ought to be used, depending on the data from the field. This methodological difference will yield flexible findings rather than inflexible data, as well as crucial information. An unstructured questionnaire is implemented in which the researcher does not predetermine the questions; most of the time, the questions are posed by the researcher during the interview, such that each question leads to the next. However, because the structured interview is predefined, the researcher approaches the community with prepared

questions, allowing him to clarify any doubts regarding the phenomenon. Interviewing is an appropriate and suitable methodology to use as an alternative to the qualitative method because of its appealing application, in which the researcher does not need to be a participant and may gather data without disrupting the phenomena.

Documentation

Documentation is used in research to gather, preserve, or record information in order to facilitate future articulation. These collected data provide a reasonable foundation for further visualising the field and source. Because the present study concentrates on the visual aesthetic aspect of Theyyam's folk-art work, considerable documentation is used, such as taking notes, recording audio and video, photographing, drawing scenes from the artwork, and so on.

Visual Documentation

Visual documentation is utilised to gather cultural elements from Theyyam. It assists research for future investigations into cultural materials. High-resolution pictures, video recordings, and field sketches are utilised to chronicle events. Material aspects of visual documentation include Theyyam dress culture, geometrical patterns, colour patterns, and colouring supplies.

Visual Reproduction and enhancement

Visual reproduction and improvement are used to accurately assess the visual aesthetics of Theyyam, notably the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawings), *mekhezhuthu* (bodily drawings), and other embellishments. To implement this approach, image reproduction techniques such as digital painting and illustration are used to create a reimagined yet respectful version of the art. To employ this, selected components of distinct Theyyams are replicated individually using digital painting, notably the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawings) and *mekhezhuthu* (bodily drawings) of Theyyam. The selected Theyyam's *mukathezhuthu* (face drawings) is precisely digitally drawn to demonstrate and

showcase its intricate design. This method underlined Theyyam's close relationship with nature by identifying a natural pattern in these ritualistic processes.

1.19 Brief Chapterisation

The thesis is organised into six chapters, and preliminary information is provided as follows:

Chapter I: Introduction

The chapter provides an overview of the current research. It begins with a brief explanation of the Theyyam and Theyyattam etymologies and their significance in the cultural realm of north Kerala. This section also discusses the significance of intricate symbolic designs and vibrant colours in Theyyam attire. It also briefly discusses colour and symbolism studies and their significance in the aesthetic development of folk-art forms such as Theyyam, as well as the cultural evolution of them. The chapter also has an introductory part that explains the significance of the study, the nature and scope of the study, the geographical area of the study, a survey of previous literature, lacunae in previous literature, research questions, hypotheses, theoretical frameworks, aims and objectives, methodology for the whole research, and the synopsis of the chapters. The chapter additionally comprises an introductory section that explains the study's significance, nature and scope, geographical area, a survey of previous literature, lacunae in previous literature, research questions, hypotheses, theoretical frameworks, aims and objectives, methodology for the entire research, and a chapter synopsis.

Chapter II: Dynamics and Structure of Theyyam in north Kerala

The chapter delves into the fundamentals of Theyyam, particularly its dynamic and structural presence as a performing tradition in north Kerala. The chapter begins by discussing the topographical and ecological peculiarities of north Kerala and their influence on Theyyam and Theyyattam, followed by a

brief overview of people's livelihoods in ancient administration, which had an important part in the formation of Theyyam. The chapter delves more into the dynamics and structure of Theyyam, including categories and characterization. The following section encompasses the fundamental framework of Theyyam, the communities, and their belief system, with an emphasis on the Theyyam performed during the Theyyattam seasons. Theyyam's communities include *velan, malayan, mailvan, pulayan, vannan, koppalan, munoottan/anjoottan, kanalaadikal,* and others. Furthermore, the chapter describes each Theyyam makeover and outfit type. It incorporates *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), *mekhezhuthu* (body drawing), *mudi* (headgear), *marchamayam* (body costume), and so on. The chapter concludes with a thorough overview of Theyyam *kettu* (the skill of creating Theyyam). The chapter is important because its extensive description and inferences helped to categorise the Theyyam forms according to the present research on colour and symbolism, which will be studied further in subsequent chapters. The present inferences helped to categorise the Theyyam in the following manner: mother goddesses, hero worship, ancestor worship, and finally, animals and other worldly deities.

Chapter III: Colour and Symbolism of Mother Goddesses cult in Theyyam

This chapter presents an exhaustive explanation and analysis of the colour and symbolic patterns of the Mother Goddess categorization of the Theyyam form. The chapter broadens by examining the history and culture of mother goddesses across the world, from prehistory to the current moment. These are examined using secondary archaeological sources of evidence. This section additionally investigates the evolution and diffusion of Mother Goddess worship across the world, followed by the Indian mainland and its impact in Theyyam, North Kerala. This chapter also examines the chosen Theyyam from the mother goddess' worship, together with the mythology, mythical stories, and literature associated with it. *Dhanya devatharadhana* (grain goddesses), *kanyaka* Theyyam (virgin goddesses), *grama devathamar* (village goddesses), *yudha moorthikal* (war iconic goddesses), *manthra moorthikal* (magical iconic

goddesses), *naayattu devathamar* (hunting goddesses), *vana devathamar* (forest deities), and *urvarya devathamar* (fertility goddesses). As a continuation, the formal and structural symbolism of mother deities is thoroughly investigated. It starts by exploring the symbolic characteristics of headgear, first studying the well-known *vatta mudi* (round headpiece) in overall Theyyattam. The *purathattu mudi* comes next, and both are round. As part of a more in-depth structural examination, the triangular-shaped mudi is shown, along with an explanation of the *valiya mudi's* symbolic features. The chapter subsequently continues on to examine the colour and symbolism of Mother Goddess's Theyyam belief system, as well as its worldview and influences from other civilisations.

Chapter IV: Colour and Symbolism of Ancestor Worship

This chapter discusses the colour and symbolism of ancestor worship, with a focus on male-oriented deities performing Theyyam. It also follows the same structure as the preceding chapter of Mother Goddess' performance. It begins with historical and archaeological evidence from secondary sources on ancestor cults across the world, followed by the Indian mainland. Furthermore, it investigates the mythology and literature of Theyyam ancestor worship, as well as its relationship to the colour and symbolic aspects of material culture. The selected ancestors, Theyyam, are grouped and studied in terms of their mythological stories, with a focus on *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), apparel, and *mudi* (headgear). Kativanur Veeran, Angakkaran Theyyam, Kshethrapalakan Theyyam, Muthappan, Vettaykkorumakan, Kandanaar Kelan, Vayanaattu Kulavan, Thekkan Kariyathan, Kannikkorumakan, Kudiveeran, and Palanthayi Kannan are examined and studied thoroughly in this chapter.

Chapter V: Magical, Otherworldly and Animal Deity Symbolism

The chapter delves into the colour and symbolism and their relationship with the myths and legends in oral literature about the non-human and otherworldly deities in the Theyyam pantheon. Firstly, the chapter elaborately

explains the selected Theyyam otherworldly deities, such as Pottan Theyyam, Pula Maaruthan Theyyam, Gulikan, etc. Further, it goes on to examine the pantheon of animal deities, especially the Kuthira chamundi, Muthala Theyyam, Puli Kandan, Puli Karimkaali, Puliyoor Kannan and Puliyoor Kali, Panchuruli Theyyam, Puli Maranja Thondachan, etc. It also examines snake deities such as Nagakanni, Nagarajan, Naga Bhagavathy, Naga Kali, etc. In the final portion, the chapter discusses the *mathramoothikal* (magical-powered deities), which are Kuttichathan Theyyam, Karim Kuttichathan, Poo Kuttichathan, Thee Kuttichathan, Para Kuttichathan, Kandakarnan Theyyam, etc.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Research findings on the Theyyam colour and symbolism reveal that the Theyyam is a traditional belief system grounded in nature and the cosmos that provides spiritual basis and well-being to the people of north Kerala. According to the chapter, the two fundamental symbolic components of Theyyam, nature and the cosmos, are frequently represented as geometric patterns and shapes. These symbolic elements in the complex design attempt to portray Theyyam not as a trivial cultural expression but rather as an insightful metaphysical portrayal of the universe itself. The massive Theyyam structure itself becomes a symbolic manifestation of the entire cosmos. In terms of colour symbolism, the reds that give Theyyam their stunning look signify a variety of diverse cultural traditions. It is significant in several ways. For example, red is a psychologically significant hue that represents death, sorrow, and dread. The chapter expands on its significance by explaining the material responsible for the red hue. The chapter concludes that Theyyam is an art form developed to alleviate the community's uneasiness following a particular dreadful tragedy. The compensating image is the fundamental geometry, and it comprises several layers of meaning that can explain the universe's understanding. The chapter also concludes with facts about diverse philosophies and civilisations and the way they use fundamental geometry to comprehend the cosmos and consciousness.

Chapter II

Dynamics and Structure of Theyyam in north Kerala

2.1 Geography and colour concept

The landscape and ecology of a geographical location have an unbreakable relationship with the art and culture developed inside them, since the lifestyle of an individual in society is determined by their geographical location. Art and the landscape function as synchronised organisms because both are by-products of human activity. According to noted geographer Jay Appleton, "the landscape is the backcloth of the total phase of human actions and part and parcel of it."[27] Perhaps for this reason, the geography of the environment inspires the people who live there to cultivate a distinct aesthetic sense and, as a result, a distinct art form and creative material culture throughout the course of their lives. The flora and fauna, for example, have a direct impact on the material culture that they produce for mundane purposes. It is a typical phenomenon in all cultures that plants and organisms from the natural world emerge as symbolic ornamental components in their artworks and craft materials; some art works explicitly replicate them in order to reach technical excellence. In certain civilisations, plant and animal life is recreated using the art and craft of material culture in order to gain mastery over the thing and make it function efficiently in a metaphysical ceremonial sense.

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[27] Jay, Appleton. *The Experience of Landscape*. London and New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975, p. 2. Also see at Rachel, DeLue, and James Elkins. *Landscape Theory*. Routledge, 2008, p.11.

Nature has had an enormous influence on art, particularly in ancient times. When humans are completely immersed in nature and life wouldn't be possible without it; the individual's art and craft are profoundly shaped by nature and natural resources. Some of the art they create is intended to tranquillize the malicious spirit or soul of violent nature and bring it under benevolent control. These artworks are based on regional myths and stories, and they are organised using natural and geographical components of the region.

These kinds of similar scenarios can be observed throughout the ancient world; Tlaloc, an Aztec rain god sculpture from 14th- to 15th-century Mexico, is one such instance of this. It is an anthropomorphic torse sculpture of the deity, which is especially terrifying since it includes a depiction of two snakes for the faces and two fangs that combine and function as the deity's teeth (see given below Figure 2.1).

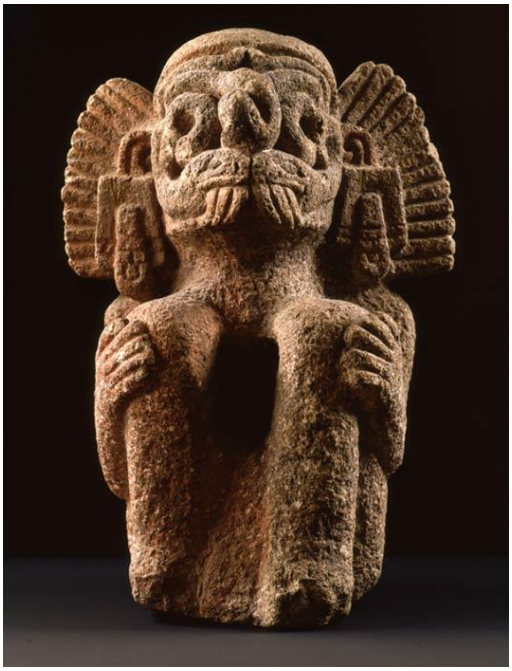

Figure 2.1: Tlaloc, Aztec rain god.[28]

The two-rattle snake figurine symbolises the thunderstorms before the rain. Rain may be both hazardous and beneficial in these tropical areas. So, it’s

[28] "The stone figure is 40 cms high, is Aztec, and is on display in the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Ethnologisches Museum." Photograph. www.mexicolore.co.uk/aztecs/artefacts/tlaloc-stone-figure-berlin. Accessed 4 Mar. 2025.

no coincidence that they constructed these figurines to please the overwhelming power of nature. One can clearly observe that in the sculptures, most of the elements are from the natural fauna of their own region.

Similarly, the Haida chieftain house, created by northwest coast Indians, features a relief sculpture above the totem poles in front of it, depicting a mythological narrative from the region's distant memory (see Figure 2.2).

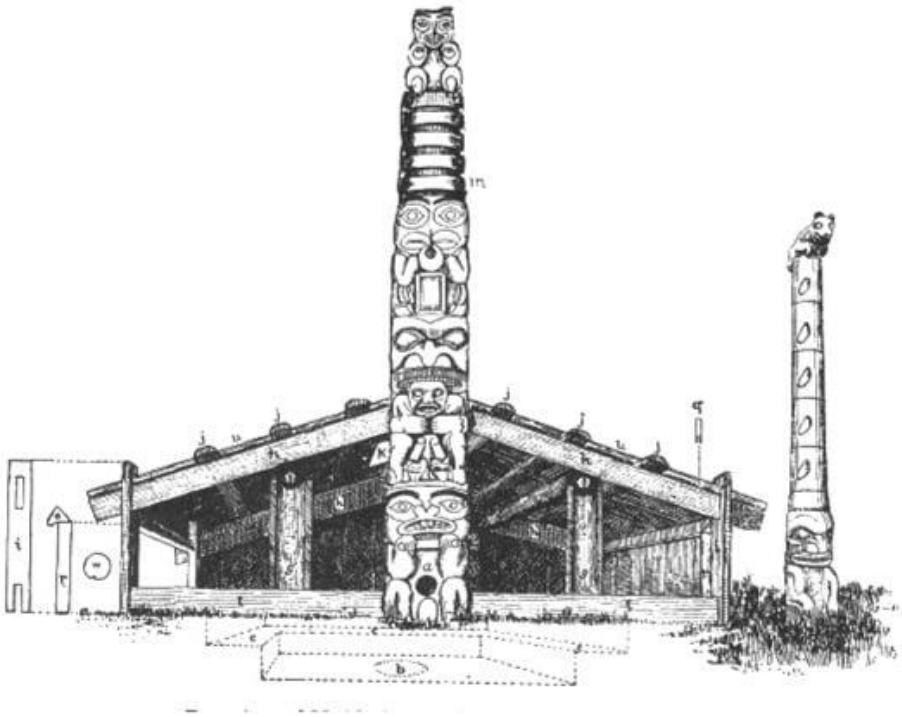

Figure 2.2: Haida chieftain house or Haida plank house.[29]

It tells the story of a sluggish guy who became a hero after defeating a monster in a local pond by baiting children with the help of a fairy bird. Wearing its skin after slaughter, he catches fish and feeds it anonymously to his mother-in-law, who remarks on his lethargy. She began to consider herself a strong witch after being flattered by this deed. However, the hero eventually misled her, and as a result, she died in embarrassment for herself. All of the characters from the stories were shown directly above the totem poles. The front half of

[29] *Haida chieftain house or Haida plank house*. *https://www.mdpi.com/1996-1073/14/16/4871*, Accessed 4 Mar. 2025.

the totem represents the monster devouring whales, followed by the monster, the wretched mother-in-law, the bird that assisted the hero, and finally the hero dressed in monster skin, clutching a handful of fish he caught. The top of the pole belongs to the children, whom he employs as fishing bait.

This example vividly illustrates how a region's natural world and geography influence its art forms and material culture. These equivalent circumstances have been observed in communities on the Indian mainland since ancient times. The influence of a region's characteristics may be seen vividly in the pattern of costume and material culture executed for everyday use. India, with its many geographical regions, has a vibrantly distinctive material culture that supports a wide spectrum of aesthetic colour themes. Changes in the environment, climatic conditions, material compositions, and the ecosystems they sustain all have a substantial influence on how people see colours.

J. W. T. Mitchell, a well-known art historian, sees landscape as a medium rather than a genre. That softly implies that "humans use all types of landscapes, such as pictorial, symbolic, mythical, imagined, and so on, to achieve artistic, economic, and social goals. Similarly, landscapes of all kinds influence and form us."[30]

Several ancient texts in South India reference the colour aesthetic notion, which has been created in accordance with the region's topography. Tholkappiyam, a Tamil poem, is significant in that it lists the gods and goddesses of a given location who have specific colour preferences. There is also mention of flowers, which are particularly important to the regions. Similarly, Kerala, in southwest India, acquired a distinct influence on art through its geography. This influence is particularly evident in the

[30] William J, Mitchell, and W. J. Mitchell. "Imperial Landscape." *Landscape and Power*, 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press, 2002.

distinctiveness and appearance of Theyyam's colour and the symbolism of the north part of Kerala.

2.2 Cultural geography of Kerala

Kerala, situated at the southwest tip of the Indian subcontinent, is an area with a coastline bordered by the Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea. Despite the fact that Kerala is geographically distant from the Indian subcontinent, its cultural legacy with other Indian civilisations remains intact. It is a confined ethnolinguistic location in comparison to other Indian states; however, it has been influenced by foreign cultures from various parts of the world and civilisations throughout history, both through sea and land roots since ancient times. Even though the area within was difficult for smooth transportation in ancient times due to the steep slope, tropical warmth, and harsh terrain, its abundant water potential countered this drawback. Several rivers and their tributaries provided methods of transportation and cultural transmigration throughout the territory they covered. These rivers and their tributaries contributed significantly to the spread of art and culture. The rivers include Nila (Perar, Bharata Puzha), Periayar, Pampa, Kunthipuzha, Chandragiri Puzha, Korapuzha, and Chaliyar. These river valleys possess a number of culturally and historically significant temple complexes. Thirunavaya, Pattambi, Thiruvillamala, Palakkad, and Chittur are located on the banks of the Bharatapuzha river. The banks of Periyar, Koduganllur, Alluva, Kaladi, Malayatur, Ayiramalai, and lastly, the banks of Pamba, all contributed to the enrichment of the cultures of Edathwa, Maramon, Chenannur, Sabarimala, and Aanamala.

2.3 North Kerala (Malabar) an Overview

North Kerala, commonly known as Malabar, is the north-western subtropical region of Kerala, surrounded by the Western Ghats in the east and the Arabian Sea in the west. It is between latitudes of 10° 1S· N and 12° 18' N and longitudes of 75° 14' E and 75° 15' E. Several theories regarding the genesis

of the term Malabar may be traced back to the land's unrecorded history. The name is considered to be an amalgam of the term's *mala* (mountain or hill) in Malayalam and *bar* (a synonym for country or continent) in Arabic and Persia. Malabar is consequently the name attributed to the hill country. Several other travellers and philosophers incorporate the alternate meaning for the name, notably Al Bruni's Melibar, Al Idrisi's Manibar, and Ibn Batuta's Malibar. It has been suggested that the term malabar was originally coined by Arab Voyager Al Biruni around 970–1039 CE. Also, in approximately 545 CE, an Alexandrian Egypt trader named Cosmos Indicopleustes narrates a town with a significant emporium of pepper-making trades along the western coast of India, known as Male; he was the first person to use the word in a corrupted form.

Particularly in north Kerala, the tropical Western Ghats spread a larger area towards the coastal regions; the midland here is smaller because of this larger area of hilly terrain parallel to the coastline. "Most of the narrow midland formed here is from the deposition of laterite soil, which is productive. However, cultivations of coconuts, jackfruit, and pepper are densely sustained in the area of laterite terraces because of the scarcity of land."[31] Even though rice is the major crop in these regions, there have been instances of rice scarcity in the past due to the inadequate number of cultivating fields. Historian M. R. Raghava Varrier observed that "several times in history, this area suffered from insufficiency of rice, more often rice imported from neighbouring states of south India."[32] Perhaps this is one of the reasons why these regions' belief systems lean more towards natural forces such as earth or mother goddess worship and tree worship, both of which are ancient techniques for conserving fertile soil.

[31] Where they [laterite terraces] break off in abrupt cliffs, the soil is extensively cultivated with coconut, jackfruit, and pepper. The flats also lying between the laterite terraces are thickly populated, and every inch of available ground is occupied. William, Logan. "Appendix, CCLX." *Malabar Manual*, 2nd ed., pdf, R. HILL, At the government press, Madras, 1887.

[32] M. R. Raghava, Varier, and Rajan Gurukkal. *Keralacharitram (Malayalam)*. Sukapuram: Vallathol Vidya Peedam, 2004, pp. 112-114.

C.A. Innes' auto-ethnographic notes make specific reference to colonial Malabar's landscapes. “The Western Ghats, surrounded by palms and beaches, are a vast landscape with lush vegetation flourishing in the humid air. Exotics thrive in the open air, while palm and jack trees contrast with the reddish highways. Natives live in separate enclosures, surrounded by a thorn barrier and plantains. The scenery changes as the country expands towards the Ghats barrier, forming low red laterite hills with paddy flats and coconut gardens. The hills rise into long spurs, deep ravines, and thick jungles. The mighty mountains of the Western Ghats tower above everything, adorned with lush forests, watching over the blessed country at their feet."[33]

The area used to get an average of 300 cm of monsoon rainfall every year. This will replenish all the various rivers and other sources of water distributed over the landmass. In accordance with the Malayalam calendar, twelve of the six months have specific seasonal festivities, including *Vishu* in *Metam*, *Nera* in *Karkidakam*, *Puthari* in *Chingam*, *Pathamudhayam* in *Thulam*, *Erppa* in *Makaram*, and *Pooram* in *Meenam.*

2.4 Colour Aesthetic in Theyyam

In terms of appearance, Theyyam seem to be dominated by bright red aesthetics. However, a thorough examination reveals that there are five colours that provide significance and attractiveness to Theyyam. The five colours can be seen in all aspects of Theyyam attire, including *mukathezhuth* (face drawing), *mekhezhuthu* (body drawing), *mudi* (headgear), *mukappalakal* (face mask), *thalachamayam* (head embellishments), *marchamayam* (body embellishments), *uduppukal* (costumes), *arachamayam* (abdomen embellishment), *kaiykkaru* (hand embellishment), and *kaakkaru* (feet embellishments).

[33] C. A, Innes, and F. B. Evans. *Malabar and Anjengo*. 1905.pp.2-3.

2.5 First artist and the conceiver of Theyyam

Manakaadan Gurukkal Aasan, the first Theyyam designer and artist, perceived Muchilot Bhagavathi as Mother Earth and the universe surrounding it. This notion of the Muchilot Bhagavathi is particularly apparent through the iconic and aniconic symbolism of its mudi (headgear). It is an amalgamation of earth, sea, sky, and stars. Mudi is a symbol of the 'Milky Sea,' cradling a bright red Lotus blossom.

2.6 Theyyam, structure and dynamics

As an art form, it is apparent that it has a robust traditional foundation, not only considering the religious circumstances but also with regard to its connection with North Kerala's history and culture. Throughout its growth, it has accomplished a multitude of objectives. Even now, it reigns unalterable with its splendour, the presence and trance of *chenda melam* (drum beats), and all its paraphernalia. According to the Malayalam calendar, the festival season runs from *Thulam Masam* to *Edavapaathi.* Beginning with the tenth dawn of this season, a thriving array of Theyyam forms will be performed in many Theyyam *kaavu* (sacred grooves) in the north-Kerala region. Theyyam's season and time period date back to its inception and continue to uphold a similar pattern through oral tradition, exhibiting a great example of the preservation of customs and tradition.

The origins of four hundred different types of Theyyam and their purposes are related, from the lands of north Kumbalaswaroopam to south Nediyirippuswaroopam. Swaroopam refers to the dominion of a certain region. Despite modern-era data on Theyyam demonstrating the availability of four hundred different types of Theyyam, oral traditional data from *tottam* songs (invocation song before Theyyam's performance) is reported to be *onoorenaalpath* (*oonukurave nalpathu*), which implies one less to become forty, or thirty-nine Theyyams. The main thirty-nine Theyyams are as follows, Bandhrukolappan, Thai para Devatha, Chuzhali Bhagavathi, Kalariyaal

Bhagavathi, , Someshwari, Padikutti amma, Vayathoor Kaaliyar, Keezhur Shaasthavu, Puthiya Bhagavathi, Madiyan Kshethrapalakan, Vayirajaathan, Vettaikkorumakan, Oorppazhassi, Ilamkarumakan, Bhammurikkal, Karimurikkan, Thekkan Karuyaathan, Poothadi, Kutthichathan, Thottunkara Bhagavathi, Bhayiravan, Uchhitta devi, Karuvaal, Raktha Chamundi, Panjuruli, Veeran Theyyam, Veera Kali, Mahaganapathi, Vishnumoorthi, Muchilottu Bhagavathi, Puli Chamundi, Veerachamundi, Kandakarnnan, Palottu Deyvam, Raktheshwari, Vayanaatu Kulavan, Kurathi, Kundora Chamundi.

During Kolathiri's rule, Theyyam and its practitioners received special honourable status. Legends surround these thirty-nine specific Theyyams, whom Kolathiri awarded the unique honour of kinship status. It is also known as *mupathaivaru kuttiparadevathamaar*, which means that the thirty-five main Theyyam with rite of performance. Because from the primary thirty-nine Theyyams, all don't have rite of performance. Some of them are shown in the table given below (see Table 2.1).

S.No.	Name of the Theyyam	Community of Worshippers	Region of performance
1	Thai para Devatha,	Vannan community	Kalarivathukal in the south, Thiruvarkadu (Madayikavu) in the north, Cherukunnu Annapoornashwari Temple in the west, and Mamanikunnu in the east.
2	Chuzhali Bhagavathi,		Chuzali Bhagavathi Temple, Kannapuram, Kannur.

3	Vayathoor Kaaliyar,	----------	----------
4	Keezhur Shaasthavu,	----------	----------
5	Puthiya Bhagavathi,	Vannan, Anjootan community	Adikkumpara Sree Puthiya Bhagavathy Temple, Kannur.
6	Madiyan Kshethrapalakan,	Vannan community.	Sree Madiyan Koolom Temple, Kasargod.
7	Vayirajaathan,	Vannan community.	Rayaramangalam Bhagavathy Kavu, Pilicode, Kasargod.
8	Vettaikkorumakan	Vannan community.	Parakkunnath Vettakoru Makan Temple, Aroli, Kannur.
9	Oorppazhassi,	Vannan community,	Parakkunnath Vettakoru Makan Temple, Aroli, Kannur.
10	Thekkan Karuyaathan,	Vannan community	Thekkan Kariyathan Temple Cherukunnu, Kannapuram, Kannur.
11	Kutthichathan,	Malayan community	Sree Kuttichathan Madam, Mudappathur, Kannur.
12	Bhayiravan,	Malayan community	Aryaparambu Sree Koottakkalam

			Temple, Mattannur, Kannur.
13	Uchitta devi	Malayan, Velan community	Aryaparambu Sree Koottakkalam Temple, Mattannur, Kannur.
14	Karuvaal,	Malayan community.	Aryaparambu Sree Koottakkalam Temple, Mattannur, Kannur.
15	Panjuruli,	Malayan, Velan, Pulaya community,	Munnad Meethal Cheviri Tharavad Devasthanam, Kasargod.
16	Veeran Theyyam,	Vannan community.	Kuttiyeri sree Puthiya Bhagavathy Temple, Taliparambha, Kannur.
17	Veera Kali,	----------	----------
18	Raktha Chamundi,	Malayan community.	Mundayangattu Kshethram, Payyanur, Kannur.
19	Mahaganapathi Theyyam,	Vannan community.	
20	Vishnumoorthi,	Malayan community.	Eramam Mavila Kallada Erathe Veedu Devasthanam. Mathamangalam, Kannur.

21	Muchilottu Bhagavathy,	Vannan community.	Vengakandi Muchilot Bhagavathy Temple, Malur, Kannur.
22	Pulichaamundi,	Koppalan, Paanan community.	Sree Pulichamundi-Bhairava-Vishnumurthi Devasthanam, Alakode, Kannur.
23	Khandakarnan,	Malayan community.	Sree kuroolikkavu Bhagavathy Kshethram, Thalasseri, Kannur.
24	Palottu Deyvam,	Vannan community.	Sree Palottu Kavu, Keecheri, Kannur.
25	Raktheshwari,	Malayan community.	Bethur Tharavad Devasthanam, Kuttikkol , Kasargod.
26	Vayanaatu kulavan,	Vannan community.	Padiyil Vayanattu Kulavan Temple, Paarakandi, Kannur.
27	Kurathi Theyyam,	Velan, Maavilan, Koppalan, Pulaya community.	Kuttyeri Puthiya Bhagavathy Kshethram, Thaliparambu.
28	Kundora Chamundi.	Velan, Maavilan community.	Kuttiyeri sree Puthiya Bhagavathy Temple, Taliparamba, Kannur.

Table 2.1: showing the Theyyam, its community and region of performance.

Some of the distinct forms of Theyyam lack a performing form and are only idols in *Kaavu* (sacred grove). As Theyyam ritual is always interwoven with people's lives and society, it is important to study the dynamism of the lifestyle and history of north Kerala in contrast with the ritual colour and symbolism of Theyyam.

2.7 Ancient Administration

In north Kerala, like any other Indian community, caste-based stratification of occupation is present in the social structure. Because Theyyam's structure is significantly influenced by cultural and social elements, it is intrinsically connected to the established caste system. Most traditional occupations, as well as the attitudes of individuals towards caste systems and hierarchies, have evolved alongside the Theyyam order. From the working class to the higher strata of society, everybody has their own organisation founded on specific Theyyam *stanams* (shrine). Elders and delegates handled *stanam's* (shrine) affairs alongside the members of the goddesses from each caste.

The feudal chieftains' groups, such as the Namboothiri and Nambiar families, and their other roots, such as the Nairs or *deshavaazhi*, exerted their dominance over these Stanams on the orders of Naduvazhi, the district governor of the state. The annual Theyyam festivities are made possible by caste-based obligation procedures and the devotion of the idols in each holy site, the *kaavu* (sacred grove). These local patronages are based on the resources made accessible by the caste's customary profession in society. The veneration of each caste is largely dependent on ritual regulations in order to achieve the goal of a successful Theyyam celebration each year.

The important caste temples of Namboothiri and Nambiar controlled the right to carry out the Theyyam and the dwelling ritual, and their familial structure concentrated on an extensive area of *deshams* or *swaroopam*. While the upper class acquires the right to organise Theyyam festivities, the privileged community imposes responsibilities on lower castes, obliging them to make

available their resources and offerings. Since this custom became prevalent, feudal families have begun competing for property and the opportunity to conduct ceremonies, which is considered a sacred responsibility. The *varavili* battle ceremony of hero worship has various evidences of intercommunal warfare. For example, the Thiyya community's principal deity, the Angakkaran Theyyam, performs an embodiment of a dispute between landlords. Similarly, the Northern Ballads provide comprehensive narratives of epic Kalari warriors who fought for land and estates at the behest of feudal landlords and Naduvazhi. The journal of Theyyam Payyampalli Chandu describes the capture of the Tamarasseri fort under the leadership of Naduvazhi of Pattara, the ruler of Kottayam Raja. The Vannan caste has the right to perform Payyampalli Chandu's Tira.

Although Theyyam was the organising principle underlying the establishment and maintenance of feudalism in Kolathunadu for centuries, Theyyattam also substantially governs society by coordinating with community standards and concluding treaties. The process of interacting, contributing, and producing in each season of Theyyam will offer a sense of an authentic, systematic lifestyle. Communities may sustain economic continuity and cohabitation in a dispersed society by utilising these living systems. The time span of each Theyyam is specifically structured in a particular manner to meet the end of requirements and resources as prescribed by ceremonial practices, allowing for cultural integrity and the dissemination of ideas all throughout society. For instance, the king and other influential authorities commissioned Theyyam to centralise the economy in a dispersed sociocultural framework.

2.8 Representation of old identities in Theyyam blessing

Caste identities are well distinguished symbolically in the Theyyam languages. While Theyyam addresses them by bestowing blessings, the Brahmins and Muslim identities can be determined by their originally established locations in the Kolathunadu region. It is known as the 'Perinchellur Gramam' among Brahmins and as the 'Matayi Nagaram' for Muslims. The

Thiyyas' settlement, referred to as *'ettillam karimana,'* is a structure made up of eight families that migrated from Karnataka. In a similar way, Vaniyan's is called '*ompathillakkar*,' and it suggests the number of nine family settlements. The description of the king's identity is also distinctive, known as '*naduvazhunnutayavar,'* which means the ruler and protector of the whole region. Some caste identities are denoted by their duties and vocations in society. In them, the Nair caste duty of following the King is represented as the '*akambadi*.' In the same instance, the Chaliyan weaver community is termed the *'idanga vadanga'*, suggesting the ease of weaving with both hands. The Veluthedan or the washerman is addressed as '*tirutatakkaran'*, which denotes their ability to do sorceries and magical rituals. The Pulayar is addressed as '*kidathan*', Kammalar as *'nankavarnam'*, and Kaniyan as *'thirikaikuda'*.

2.9 Communities of Theyyam

Theyyam is mostly performed in communities such as Tulu Velan, Malayan, Paanan, Maavilan, Vannaan, Kopaalan, Anjootan, Munootan, Chikathaan, Paravan, Cheruvan, Kalanaadi, Pulluvan, Ganakan, and Nlikeyavar. Certain communities have exclusive rights to perform specific forms of Theyyam, whereas others, such as Malayan and Vannan, are able to perform other varieties.

2.9.1 Tulu Velan community

The Velan community is known to have migrated from Karnataka, namely Gokarna. Most of them speak Tulu, a community language. According to reports, the Velan community came to Cheruthazham, Kannur, alongside the Brahmin group. They have been highly skilled at crafting domestic and agricultural utensils out of bamboo and reed plant leaves; the craftsmanship is evident in their Theyyam material culture. They worship Bhadra Kali as their main idol and Kundora Chamundi as their chief deity.

Kammiyamma, Kurathi, Kallurutti, Monthikolam, Ayyam Parava, Kundora Chamundi, and Thurakkarathi are among the most prominent

Theyyams performed by the Velan community. Despite having fewer Theyyams, the Velan community's forms are regarded as the precursors of Theyyam performance in north Kerala. ‘The Velan community has been especially careful about preserving their thousand-year-old heritage in its original form rather than any other. For example, the *Kaati Kombu* (Gaur Horne) utilised by this ensemble as a musical instrument is a pure act of primitiveness, implying the preservation of old artefacts. In contrast to other Theyyam traditions, they never employ *chenda* (drum) beats; instead, they engage solely in ritual-based devotion, with just one ritual name for the most excellent performer in the community, Kiyyooraan. The Velan community's primordial forms and design can be observed in *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing), clothing, and other decorations, in addition to their traditional musical instruments.’[34]

2.9.2 Malayan community

The Malayan community mainly resides in the north of Kasaragod and the south of the Vadakara district in north Kerala. In this community, both male and female members make contributions to Theyyam. The 'Malayi' female members of the community used to sing thottam songs during the Theyyam performances. Raktheeswari, Chudala Kali, Dhoomavathi, Uchitta, Moovalankuzhi Chamundi, Vasoorimaala, Panchuruli, Raktha Chamundi, Pottan Theyyam, Bhairavan, Kruvaal, Vishnumoorthi, Maadayi Chamundi, Kuttichathan, Karimkuttichathan, Pookuttichathan Kurathi, and Kannamaan Theyyam are the prominent Theyyams they perform.

Even the Malayan community has a specific rank, which includes a ritual name for each Theyyam performer depending on their performance skill, as determined by the village head and community: Panikkar, Perumalayan, Padthron, Muthoodan, Bhakka, Vadakkankooran, Peruchellooran, Alladon, Parappen, Godhavarmman, Kavenaadan, and Mingunnan.

[34] R. C, Karippath. *Theyyaprapancham (folklore)*. Kairali books, 2012, p. 30.

During the Malayalam month *karkidakam* (July to August), the community conducts a particular mini-Theyyam in each and every dwelling by young boys named Vedan. Its *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) differentiates from those of the smaller Theyyams described earlier; it is known as *chayillya theppu* (cinnabar painting). and it has been accompanied by the *chorachuttu udayada* (blood colour clothing) and *kireedam* (crown). The form is believed to be the manifestation of Siva, and it is done for the purpose of eliminating the harmful infestations that occur in households.

2.9.3 Mavilan community

Malayile Velan, or the Velan of Hills, is said to be the Mavilan community. As the name suggests, they mainly follow tribal life style and culture and live in the east hilly regions of north Kerala. They reside at the east part of Hosdurg and Thaliparambu Taluk, regions namely, Eleri, Malom, Vaykkara, Eruvesshi, Vayakkara, Thadikadavu, Kuttoor, Peringom. They have ten types of family kinship groups, such as *Njallammaru, Kinnyanmaar, Nedilommaru, Vennarammaru, Vettiloomaru, Amminammaru, Kuruvaadaru, Kuduknmaaru, Naadammaru, and Chandrammaru.* They stay at the east part of Hosdurg and Thaliparambu Taluk, regions namely, Eleri, Malom, Vaykkara, Eruvesshi, Vayakkara, Thadikadavu, Kuttoor, Peringom.

Mavilan are considered competent dry-land rice cultivators who also manufacture domestic items utilising reed plant leaves. Traditionally, they conduct Theyyams in their own temple, known as Theyyam *kavu* (sacred grove), with their own community performers involved. The principal Theyyam that they perform aimed at enhancing or flourishing dry land paddy production is Koduvalan. The creation of Theyyam and ornamentation is absolutely natural and organic, demonstrating the conservative essence of tribal tradition and distinguishing the Mavilan group of individuals.

Mavilans commonly perform Koorvam Theyyam, Naatadakkam Theryyam, Vanapootham, Chattiyoor Bhagavathy, Veerambinar, Narukandan,

Karimanal Chamundi, Muthaaran, Kattumadantha, Koonjaar Theyyam, Malakurathi, Karanoon Theyyam, Theyyottu Theyyam, Pullikurathi, Chingathar Veeran, Kallurutti, and Vandu Theyyam. Every year, they organise a performance called Kaaranon Theyyam Muthaaran (grandfather) in significant family kinship houses to honour their forefathers. The community's performance is mostly centred in Kerala's northernmost region, specifically the Kasaragod district. This community performs a variety of Mappila Theyyam (Muslim Theyyam) in these areas, including Koyimammad, Kalanthan Mukri, Mukkripokkar, Aali Mappila, and others.

During the harvest season in north Malabar, distinctive Theyyams known as Kaalakettu and Kuliyankettu are performed by village households. The greatest performers in this community were recognised to be titled Kodakkaran and Chinkam for their unique roles. Even the death ceremony of a Theyyam specialist is unique: before cremating the performer's body, they inscribe the *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) of the specific kind of Theyyam that the dead performer used to perform. The method aids in the integration of the performer's body into the Theyyam at the conclusion.

2.9.4 Pulaya communities

‘The expression *pula* refers to agricultural land, while Pulayan refers to the community that works diligently on the agricultural land for the region's prosperity. The community continues to be considered the one that practices and preserves Dravidian customs and culture in the Theyyam lands and minds of individuals. Their kinship family system is composed of the *pathillam* (ten family houses), which includes Poyiran, Maniyan, Thalliriyan, Vembirinjan, Kallakudiyan, Velluva, Pongadan, Edamana, Oolnadiyan, Pallikudiyan, Idacheriyaan, Minnadiyan, Koramkudiyan, Aaramban, Thaliyil, Uooramban, Kallen, Magaadan, Koyileriyan, Mapidisseri, and Idamana. They do not perform at other communal temples; instead, they perform at their own family premises. The new generation of boys' *arangettam* (initiation into stage performance) commences while they're around ten or twelve years old. The

Pulaya *guru* (Pulaya communities' teacher or master) would conduct this ritual act in front of close relatives and members of his family. The initiation will take place in a specially established tent, and the boys will be given a makeover by *thalapaali* and *thirumudi*. The ceremony's major objective is to prepare the younger generation to accept responsibility for their families.'[35]

Mariyattam, or Marikkaruvnattam, is performed during *karkidakam* (the month of replenishment) as a safeguard against sickness and misfortune. In addition, throughout the same month, they perform as Marikkalachi, Marikkalayan, Maamaykkaliyan, and Maamayakalichi. Until they get closer to the beach, they perform on every piece of land, dwelling to ward off negative omens brought by the sea. Pulapottan and Eappalli Theyyams, for example, are widely recognised for their performances depicting the caste system's aversion to purity and contamination. The Pulaya Theyyam pantheon is strengthened by the representations of stories of defiance and struggle, as well as those of Theyyams such as Kaari and Viruntha, who share the identities of magical forces and forms based on the rebirth stories of victims of jealousy.

They perform the following types of Theyyams: Ambiler Kurikkal, Ariyakkara Bhagavathi, Kalachi, Kaliyan, Karanon, Kaavumbayipothi, Kavumbai Bhagavathi, Kujar Kurathi, Karichamundi, Manthramoorthi, Eapala Theyyam, Kurathi, Vadavathoormuthara, Nagakanni, Vattyanpolla, Vellur Kurikkal, Dharmadaivam, Kundoor Chamundi, Koomanaatty, Pethaalan, Kaari Kurikkal, Madayil Chamundi, Bangalathu Bhagavathi, Gulikan, Eettumoorthi Maruthiyodan, Vishnu Murthi, Chorayilpodicha Gurunathan, Kalathattu Bhagavathy, Embran Theyyam, Pulapottan, and Panchuruli. They emphasise the ancestors' worship forms of Theyyams.

[35] Ibid, p. 41.

2.9.4.1 Sacred spaces of Pulayas or *Kottam*

Kottams are sacred areas where Pulayas are accustomed to worshipping their deities and where specific Theyyams are carried out in accordance with the deities. Deities have been placed under their corresponding weapons, which could be either a simple blade or a *trisula*. It used to be difficult to identify a Pulaya area without Kottam or sacred grooves. Even in locations with large paddy fields, grooves are not possible; the goddesses are worshipped underneath the *pala* (scholar tree) or *kaanjiram* (poison nut tree), revered trees. Each Pulaya clan has its own distinctive *kottam*. Each Kottam will have a primary god as well as sub-deities; the main deity's significance will differ based on the clan. Pulayas' important *kottams* are Mushangath kottam, Manathanakkavu kottam, Pattani kottam, Kaiyath kottam, Kavumpaie kottam, Parangi kottam, and Muyiath kottam. These, among other villages, function as gathering places for Pulayas to exchange their culture with future generations. The fundamental feature of Pulaya Theyyam's reliance on an eco-centric approach to living is apparent in its overall form and space. Much of the Theyyam forms are composed of natural and readily accessible materials; for instance, in Pottan Theyyam, many of the costumes and headdresses are fashioned of *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds).

2.9.5 Vannan Communities

The Vannan community stands apart in the Theyyam pantheon because of the genres they perform. The Vannan community is known by a variety of names throughout Kerala, including Peruvannan, Mannan, Perumannan, and others. They concentrate on traditional vocations like washing, tailoring, medical treatments, black magic, and traditional ceremonial art performance. They exceed the vast majority of mother goddesses due to their spectacular performance as well as their exquisite form and structure. The *'ettillams'* that perform Theyyam include Adukkaan, Aringodar, Thaliyil, Nelliyoodan, Kandancherikkal, Mangadan, and Mubhagadan, symbolising the eight various

types of family residences in the community, grouped by kinship. As the population expands, these family names make it much simpler for people to connect with their own relatives. The difference between family homes is that they have a marriage connection between them, despite not marrying in the same family residence.

On the 28th day of the Malayalam month *Karkidakam* (the month of rejuvenation), which runs from July to August, the Vannan community executes a special Theyyam known as Karkadothi at every home to heal ailments spread during the rainy season. The community's younger generations, who are nearly ten years old, carry out the ritual. Because of its decoration, this form might be considered one of the simplest among Theyyam forms. It consists of the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), known as the *theppukuri*; the apparel is the *chorchuttu udayada* (covering red dress); and the head holds a little *kireedam* (crown). According to the belief system, Theyyam helps to eliminate any negative omens in the family by performing in its surrounding area. In the Kasaragod region, during the *Karkidakam* month, the Vannan community conducts another tiny Theyyam called Marutha for the same purpose. The Onathaar is another notable little Theyyam performed during the Malayalam month of *Chingam* (August) as part of the Onam celebrations. Onathaar is based on the Onathappan idea. These are the Theyyam, who encourage the community's younger generation to perform and exercise in the hopes of one day becoming performers themselves.

The Vannan community has had the authority to perform the majority of the Theyyam since the beginning of time; it is believed that the Vannan communities alone performed more than 90% of the mother goddess Theyyam. Aside from this, several other Theyyams, including heroic Theyyams, are also performed by the Vannan community. Those are Bhaiyravan, Bali, and Ariya Poomaruthan, Vayanattu Kulavan, Kandanaar Kelan, Vairajathan, Kudi Veeran, Vettaykkorumakan, Perumpuzhyachan, Kurikkal Theyyam, Thacholi Othenan, Korachan, Kurikkal Theyyam, Padaveeran, Thekkan Kariyathan,

Kshethrapaalan, Kathivanoor Veeran, Kayaran Theyyam, Padarkulangara Veeran, Vishakandan, Oorpazhassi, Kannikkoru Makan, Pulimaaruthan, Nagarajan, Pattar Theyyam, Munnayireeswaran, and Puliyoorukandan. Another unique aspect of Vannan society is that certain of the Theyyam, such as Puthiya Bhagavthy and Muthappan Theyyam, are capable of performing regardless of the season. Puthiya Bhagavathy is believed to perform indefinitely in order to cure seasonal ailments. It is often conducted with a large amount of fire on the *mudi* (headgear) and abdomen in open spaces or in a temporary location built in the heart of paddy fields to cure illnesses such as smallpox.

2.9.6 Koppalan community

The community is greatly influenced by the culture of Tulunadu (the land of Tulu) and belongs to the hilly regions of Kasaragod district in northern Kerala. “The community’s main occupation is said to be crafting mundane household products using areca sheaths; the name Koppalan comes from the usage of *pala kottunavar* (benders of areca sheaths). And in other beliefs, Koppalan is said to be the combination of two words: *kopu* (embellishments) and *aalunavar* (those who use), which means those who use the embellishments of Theyyam.”[36] In regions of Tulunadu, the communities are named Nalkedhayar; in the tulu language, *nalke* means dance. So those who perform Theyyam go into all the houses and are named with honour as Nalkethagal.

The Koppalan group has eighteen *illams* (family kinship homes); the tribe's culture adheres to these Illam structures, indicating that their culture is old. The *illams* (family residences) consist of Arasannabari, Kinniyarabari, Nikartharabari, Ammanannabari, Bhamakarabari, Maanindhanabari, Artharabari, Chellibiri, Naranennabari, Chaalibari, Koorvarabari, Chaaliyunnibari, Somanabari, Saminindhabari, Kundachabari, Ankaarendhanayi, Konkinibari, and Pikkemindhanaayi. Koppalans are well-known for their medical practice and expertise in treating childhood ailments.

[36] Ibid. p. 45.

Furthermore, the group is considered to have traditional knowledge of ayurvedic medicine for treating a variety of ailments.

During the harvesting season and the month of *Karkidakam* (rejuvenation), the Koppalan community performs Theyyam, which is associated with rejuvenation and wellness at home. Aattagalanjan is the most prominent one of the *Karkidakam* months (July–August). *Aati* signifies *the Karkidakam* month, while *Kalanjan* denotes *kalayuka* (eradication). This seems to indicate that the removal of those miseries is caused by sickness. Aattagalanjan is revered as the goddess of eradicating misery.

The community's essential Theyyam forms include Manichi, Makkali, Puli Chamundi, Padinjare Chamundi, Koragathaniya, Kakkangadi Chamundi, Iruvaru Pootham, Gulikan, Jogi Theyyam, Kallurutti, Madhumaan, Malaraay, Pilaadukka Chamundi, Pottajja, Aattakkari, Kurathi, Panjuruli, Bappiriyan, Erumooppaya, Praaman, Koomara Chamundi, Bhandari, Gulikarnaalu, Bhavannu, Erukoppala, Galinjan, and Murigar. The Kopalan community's Theyyams can be classified into four different categories based on their nature as archetypes. They are: individuals who become God after death through supernatural means; those with historical significance; heroes who died young; and those affiliated with animal form. They observe stringent traditional vows and procedures before performing and transforming into the Theyyam form. *Bhramachariyam* (celibacy) begins when one performer obtains agreement in the form of symbolical signals that include areca leaves, areca nuts, or money. During these times, the performer maintains an exclusive spiritual attitude by strictly adhering to vegan food regulations and eschewing all types of sexual desire; they also practice sleeping under green palm fronds. There will be ceremonies at the beginning and end of the performance to seek blessings from Koppalan gurus and ancestors.

The Theyyam communities, including Vettuvar and Paravar, are sub-castes belonging to the Koppalan community. Vettuvar used to perform the majority of the Theyyams performed by the Koppalan community, as well as

certain specific Theyyams such as Naaranamaani. Poomaani and Kinimaani are two types of Theyyam that are exclusive to Paravar.

2.9.7 Munoottan and Anjoottan

Munoottan and Anjoottan are the other two Theyyam communities that have been renounced for their performance in north Kerala. Monoottans are predominantly located in Thalasseri, Vadakara, and Koyilandi. These two communities are believed to have originated from the Velan community and were subsequently established as a sub-division and ritualistic title by *Thampuran* (the sovereign authority) and their respective regions. It is believed that Vellan, possessing strength and the ability to carry out responsibilities, is included in the Munoottavar and Anjoottavar groups that safeguard temples and marketplaces.

"The caste and ritual designations of the community are identical, and they have the privileged status to perform in Prayattukara swaroopam (northern Kottayam areas), Kumbranadu (Vadakara regions), and Kolaswaroopam (Kannur regions). The Munoottan community performs various forms of Thira, including Uchitta, Kariyathan, Vasurimaala, Thalachil, Nagakali, and Veerabhadran. Theyyams include Pullivettakkorumakan, which is traditionally performed at Kusavar (pot-makers) temples, as well as Karivilli, Angankaaran, Pullipothi, Kammiyamma, Vannathipothi, Ilavilli, Kuttichathan, Paraliyamma, and Thoovakkari."[37]

Anjoottan formerly resided in the regions of Payyanur, Neeleswaram, Cheruuvathur, Vadakara, Koyilandi, and Kottayam. The older people, as well as the younger ones, consider that the community emerged out of the Velan community. Furthermore, some academics assume that Anjoottan derives its name from the Velan community's ritualist title. They are mostly followers of mother divinities and consider Theyyam to be their community profession.

[37] Ibid. p. 47.

Thai Paradevatha, Aariyapoomaruthan, Tulu Veeran, Puthiya Bhagavathy, and Porkali Bhagavathy are the most common kinds of Theyyam they perform, and they additionally have the right to perform Thiruvapana Theyyam in Anju Swaroopam (five native countries). Anjoottans excel in costume making and *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing); therefore, they execute Muchilottu Bhagavathy's sacred form in temples such as Muchilottukavu. However, in some Muchilottu Kavu, both the Vannan and Anjoottan communities practice the same form of Muchilottu Bhagavathy to sort out ownership conflicts.

2.9.8 Kalanaadikal

Kalanaadikal is another ethnic community that dwells in Wayanad, also known as Kalanaadiyan. The community is well-known for preserving its traditions, and Theyyam performances continue in Pulpalli, Muthanga, Malavayal, Paakam, and Thelampaara. Kalanaadikal specialises in creating a beautiful spiritual atmosphere in this particular region for Theyyam. Kalanaadikal performs in a variety of areas and positions: Poothadi, Masoor Maanikavu, Cheengeri, Kurumbyadu, Eechakunnu, Purakkaadi, Chullikkodu, Kundathoor, and Thelampara.

Kalanaadikal communities' Theyyam shapes are frequently simple enough; they did not strive for elaborate embellishment. Worshippers believe they are famous on a superficial level, specifically for the Nigrahanugraham (boons for annihilating power). The most commonly performed Theyyams include Poothadi Theyyam, Kalimala Thampuran, Paakam Theyyam, Kaaran, Purakkadi Theyyam, Malakkarikali, and Kandanpuli. The Kalanaadikal community is well-known for dedicating their souls to the activities that they participate in.

2.10 Categories and characterisations of Theyyam

“According to the nature of *Theyyam* and its associated myth in particular, it is possible to classify *Theyyam* into different types, namely the

Theyyam of God and Goddesses, ancestors (heroes and heroines), spirits and devils, and nature or animals."[38] Professor Dilip. M. Menon recommends the classification of the broad four divisions of aspects, “There are the aspects of Shakti-Bhagvati, Chamundi, and Kurathi, who form the most prominent of the 350 or so deities worshipped. The second category includes the variations of Siva-*Pottan, Gulikan, Bhairavan*, etc. Here too, a considerable degree of mixture is evident, with ghosts, spirits, and local heroes being performed as manifestations of Siva. The Vaishnava Theyyams in the third category is not as important as the first two. The fourth category of heroes and heroines is always performed as an aspect of one of the earlier divisions."[39] When it comes to the renowned historian K. K. N. Kurupp, the classification is as follows: “Snake worship, warrior worship, and tree worship dating from centuries before the Christian era continued to form an integral part of the *Theyyattam pantheon."*[40]

However, the current study, which is based on a visual aesthetics perspective, will categorise artefacts based on similarities in structural form, symbolism, iconographic patterns, and other factors. In this context, the categories will be arranged as follows: mother goddesses, ancestral male gods, and otherworldly and non-human deities. The majority of these forms have been amalgamated with Shaivite traditions about Sakti and Siva principles, while some have been embedded with Vaishnavism, as seen in the Ramayana and the Vishnu Puranam. Such forms appear in the concepts of Seetha, Rama, Lakshman, Hanuman, and Bali.

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[38] J. J, Pallath. Theyyam: *An Analytical Study of the Folk Culture, Wisdom, and Personality*. 1995.

[39] Dilip M, Menon. *"The Moral Community of the Teyyattam: Popular Culture in Late Colonial Malabar." Studies in History 9, no.2*, New Delhi, Sage Publication, 1993, pp 198.

[40] K. K. N, Kurup. *The Cult of Teyyam and Hero Worship in Kerala.* Indian Publications, Calcutta, 1973, pp. 18-19.

2.10.1 Mother goddesses

The traditional idea of mother goddesses, or feminine deities, encompasses approximately 360 of the 400 manifestations. These forms originate primarily from conceptions related to the ancient concept of the mother creatrix; later, they were inspired by the Shaktistic mythologies of Parvathi and Parashakti, such as Bhagavathi, Chamundi, Pothi, and Kali. Female goddesses predominate the Theyyam pantheon not solely in terms of numbers but also through their vibrant attire. Mother Goddess Deity's appearance distinguishes itself from others largely by the additional embellishment it undergoes; the first is its breastplate. Breast plates are made of both permanent and temporary materials, such as wood, iron, and copper, with some manufactured from coconut shells.

Another distinctive characteristic is its *thirumudi* (headgear), which differentiates significantly from other classifications. The female goddesses' greatest adornments are their outstanding stature along with their complex *mudi* (headgear). Some appear to reach for the sky simply because of their sheer length, which is analogous to the shikara characteristic of temple structures that point towards the sky or the cosmos in general. As an embodiment of such immense size, *thirumudi* (headgear), astounds the worshipper with his unreachable physicality. In another group of female Theyyams, the mudi is massive and spherical, surrounded by the deity’s furious visage, embellishments, and *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing). It redirects the attention of worshippers or viewers to its centre, the Theyyam's face. A large number of mother goddesses wear *mudi* (head gear) in a round structure, bearing furious expressions. The diversity of iconic forms of Mother Goddesses accounts for ninety percent of the Theyyam pantheon, while the tale of Darika's slaying, or Darika *vadham*, accounts for seventy percent of Goddess religion.

There are several versions of the forms of Theyyam performed on the basis of the same mythology. In Theyyam terminology, it is known as Thai Para Devathamar. they are namely Kalariyal Bhagavathy, Koolanthat Bhagavathy,

Thuluvanathu Bhagavathy, Chaamakaavu Bhagavathy, PalamKualangara Bhagavathy, Arathil Bhagavathy, Ettikulam Bhagavathy, Nilamangalath Bhagavathy, Porkali Bhagavathy, Vallarkulangara Bhagavathy, Ashtamichal Bhagavathy, Kammadathu Bhagavathy, Karakkeel Bhagavathy, Kalarikkal Bhagavathy, Chembhilottu Bhagavathy, Palamkulangara Bhagavathy, Kappadu Bhagavathy, Neelamangalathu Bhagavathy, Pacheni Bhagavathy, Chaamakaavu Bhagavathy, PalamKualangara Bhagavathy, Arathil Bhagavathy, Ettikulam Bhagavathy, Elampachi Bhagavathy, Manjajeri Bhagavathy, Veeranjira Bhagavathy, Kannangalam Bhagavathy, Eranjikeel Bhagavathy, Kuttikool Bhagavathy, Nelliyatt Bhagavathy, Parakadav Bhagavathy, Vareekara Bhagavathy, Eramath Bhagavathy, Koovalanthattil Bhagavathy.

Kundora Chamundi, Raktha Chamundi, Moovalamkuzhi Chamundi, Kari Chamundi, Veera Chamundi, Madayil Chamundi, Pannikulathu Chamundi, Kayitha Chamundi, Padinjaare Chamundi, Koliyattu Chamundi, and Kizhakke Chamundi. are some of the Mother Goddesses who are performed in 'Chamundi' form; the majority of them have a circular mudi.

Some mother goddess names incorporate the expression *amma* (Malayalam for mother) instead of Bhagavathy. Some of them are Kalleri Amma, Chamakavil Amma, and Puthiyarbathu Amma. An explanation might be that this particular Theyyam is exclusively indigenous to Kerala.

The following fundamental variations of Theyyam on the phrase Kali are Veerar Kali, Kari Kali, Kuthira Kali, Panchuru Kali, Parava Kali, Chudala Bhadra Kali, Kodum Kali, Pullikkari Kali, Bhadra Kali, Chootta Kali, Thoova Kali, and Puliyoor Kali. These theyyams also share their origins in Kerala, since Kali was a significant part of the indigenous people's worship system from time immemorial. Furthermore, the forms known as Achi, Pothi, Thampuratti, Bhairavi, Bhadrakali, Sri Kurumba, and Chirumba are among the various other forms of mother goddesses.

2.10.1.1 Mother Goddesses came by wooden ship

Certain narrative stories mention the mother goddesses travelling from Aryanadu to Malanadu in a *marakalam* (wooden ship). The goddesses' names are Ariyakara Bhagavathy, Ariyapookanni, Aayiti Bhagavathy, Chuzhali Bhagavathy, Bhadrakali, Payyakal Bhagavathy, Soolakudariyamma, Punnakaal Bhagavathy, Oochulikadavath Bhagavathy, and Poomaala Bhagavathy.

Each component of human existence is dynamic, and it appears that Theyyam, which is intrinsically connected to human history and civilisation, will become dynamic as well.

2.11 *Aniyalam* (Makeup and Costumes) of Theyyam

In Malayalam, *aniyalam* is a portmanteau word that is a blend of two words: *aniyanulla* (thing to wear) and *alamkaram* (embellishment). That means it refers to "the things to wear as embellishments." Velan, the earliest community of Theyyam, constructed the box known as *pelya*, which was used for transporting or storing *aniyalam*. Thus, it emphasises the significant role of the embellishments from the beginning. Theyyam's makeover is profoundly surrealistic in structure, representing the deity as a supernatural being. Individual aspects, such as *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), *mudi* (head gear), apparel, and other decorations, each have their own symbolic value in the formation of a Theyyam's expression and character. These symbolic colours, imagery, and materials enable the performer's body, functioning as the deity's vehicle, to absorb the transcendental existence of the individual deity. The symbolic concepts and embellishments associated with the deity represent the ancient people's connection with nature, earth, and the cosmos. Although the deity's transcendental existence can be transmitted to the performer's body through a multitude of activities, including the surroundings and paraphernalia within the performance space, the costume and makeover generate an otherworldly trance in the performer's mind. The most obvious evidence of this is the activity after the deity's transformation. The deified performer, with or

without props, exudes an irrepressible intensity that no ordinary person can digest. The technique of performing in a trance could possibly be perceived as a catharsis of emotional burdens in society. The ornamentation, such as fire, featured in many Theyyams is possibly regarded as an essential component in emotional trance, which reduces adverse emotions. Dreams are believed to have prompted the artist to produce the deity's visage. Some deities' thottam songs accurately describe their appearances. For example, the thottam praising Vishnumoorthy Theyyam demonstrates the first divine arrival of the Vishnumoorthy God in Kottapuram, Neeleshwaram. It is known that the divine astrologers obtained a vision to build a Theyyam form for the Vishnumoorthy God and identified a suitable person, "Palaayi Parappen," a Malayan community artist. It has been declared that at the time the artist initially began to explore the divine, he beheld the deity's visage in his dreams.

	Marchamayam	**Theyyam**
1	*Marummula*	Madiyil Chamundi, Raktha Chamundi, Moovalamkuzhi Chamundi, Raktheshwari, Panjuruli, Naagakani, Narambil Bhagavathy, Angakulangara Bhagavathy, Kakkara Bhagavathy.
2	*Ezhiyaram*	Thaiparadevatha, Padakethi Bhagavathy, Moolampatta Mathavu, Porkali Bhagavathy Vallarkulangara Bhagavathy.
3	*Arichanthu*	Kurikkal Theyyam, Kannikkorumakan, Maanicheridaivam, Vayanattu Kulavan, Kathivannur Veeran, Bhairavan.

Table 2.2: *Marchamayam* (body embellishments) and the particular Theyyam who uses it.

The above Table 2.2 shows some of the body embellishments that were part of the Theyyam from its origin, which Palaayi Parappen conceived through

his dreams. As a result, Theyyam enables us to understand the ancient cultures' dreams, imaginations, and aesthetics accurately. This knowledge of art has been passed down from generation to generation via activities that are strictly restricted to specific patterns and shapes. Theyyam's makeover requires the acquisition of specifically designated sacred places for grooming, which are known by many different names among the Theyyam community members. Some communities, like both Vannan and Malayan, have permanent venues in which they can acquire more intricate Theyyams. For some Theyyams, the grooming chambers will be temporary. Inside these chambers, each ornament will be suspended from the roof from top to bottom; this will let the Theyyam specialists readily determine the material in the sequence of the makeover. Coconut sheaths will be placed on the ground in order to keep performers' bodies cool while the long process of *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) happens. The sanctity of the area remains intact by restricting accessibility only to those who achieve abstinence and also by setting up a lamp that glows until their performance is complete.

2.11.1 *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing)

It is the most significant feature of the overall Theyyam embellishment. *mukathezhuthu* translates as "face drawing," which implies drawing the deity's visage on the performers' faces. Though this art is transient in nature, its unmodified traditional pattern of design prior to any embellishments makes it aesthetically pleasing. The aesthetics of the design pattern are less tainted since there are no external influences. In other words, *mukathezhuthu* patterns are expressions that have emerged as a result of inherent living attributes. It has numerous stories to convey, including the history of Theyyam and the stories of successive generations. Its aesthetic could be specified as distinct in origin, and it possesses the power to generate a metaphysical entity within the performer's physical body.

All the colours and shades used in *mukathezhuthu* are derived from natural pigments and materials. Red, white, black, yellow and green are among

the most commonly used colours to create different tints. *Chayilyam* (cinnabar)[41] and *kumkum* are used to generate red, *arimmavu* (rice paste) to make white, kohl to make black and *neelam* to make green. The colour yellow is used in two alternatives: pale yellow and orange. The pale-yellow colour is obtained from a combination of *manayola* (orpiment)[42] and turmeric. In contrast, oranges can be produced by combining *mayayola* (yellow) with *chayillyam* (red). Finally, *neelam* (blue) was blended with *manayola* (yellow) to get the green colour. Immediately after preparation, pigments are suspended in either water or oil. The foundation coat on the face is prepared with a water-based solution, and oil-based colours are used to write the deity's symbolic shapes and attributes. The written drawings won't blend with the foundation coat if separate medium-based colours are utilised, and they will remain clearly apparent even after prolonged performances. While the *mukathezhuthu* artist creates complicated pattern symbols on the performer's face, he lies down with coconut leaves on the floor. The preparation, such as combining colours while writing, takes place in the coconut shell.

Each deity's face has a unique writing that varies from one form of Theyyam to another. The many patterns in the various regions of the face, forehead, eyes, cheeks, lips, and jaws each have their own unique name. The combination of these specific designs, depending on the character, results in a distinctive appearance on each Theyyam's face. Based on this, each face character is given its own name. There are forty different styles of *mukathezhuthu*, including *shangum vairadhalam, prakkezhuth, pulikurichezhuthu, anjupulli aanakalu, nagam thanezhuthu, kadarampulli, kookarivalu, kozhipushpadhalam, theppukuri, shangittezhuthu, thadithandayum nettikuriyum, theppu, minukku, shangum valum, arayakodi, panni mookku, kuttishangu, parunthuval, thelvalu, and malayumpulli*. The art

[41] Mineral cinnabar produced from the volcanic activity, it is the most frequent ore used to refine elemental mercury, and it is the historical source of vermilion, a beautiful red or scarlet colour, as well as other red mercury paints.

[42] Orpiment is the yellow transparent mineral arsenic sulfide.

of writing on the face begins with the most significant feature of the face, the eye. The *mukathezhuthu* artist highlights the eye with kohl in the particular shape that Theyyam demands. After writing the eyes, the artist draws the entire face with *manayola*, a light orange or yellow colour, as a foundation layer. Furthermore, whole symbols and patterns are created employing a part of precisely prepared *chayilyam* in the colour red.

Mukathezhuthu's (face drawing) writing pattern displays Theyyam's distinctive connection with nature from the very beginning. The vast majority of the patterns are drawn from the metaphorical imagination of animals, birds, insects, flora, wildlife, etc. For example, in the widely recognised Raktha Chamundi, the *mukathezhuthu's* (face drawing) eye is referred to as *maankannu* (the eye of a deer); in the Thiruvappan Theyyam, the teeth are referred to as *pambinthetta* (the teeth of a snake); and in Maanicheridaivam, the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) one part is referred to as *korangiritham* (the monkey's sitting posture). Understanding this pattern is also a glimpse of history, specifically how individuals symbolise and draw a particular image. In other words, it provides an unobstructed glimpse into ancient society's aesthetics and imagination. Given below, the table 2.3 shows the details of *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), and the particular Theyyam embellishes it.

	Mukathezhuthu	**Theyyam**
1	*Prakkezhuthu*	Muchilottu Bhagavathy, Kannangattu Bhagavathy, Porkali Bhagavathy, Vallarkulangara Bhagavathy, Kshethrapalakan,
2	*Kuttishangu praakum*	Kurivaalu, Panjuruli, Uchitta.
3	*Nagathannezhuthu*	Padveeran, Karanon Theyyam, Kathivannur Veeran.
4	*Nari kurichezhuthu*	Puliyur Kali, Puliyur Kannan, Kandampuli, Kalappuli, Pulimaruthan,

5	*Nagakuri*	Perumbhuzhayachan, Thoovakkaran, Naagakani
6	*Theppu kuri*	Moovalamkuzhi Chamundi, Raktheshwari, Bhairavan, Raktha Chamundi.
7	*Shangum vairadhalam*	Narambil Bhagavathy, Puthiya Bagavathy, Padakethi Bhagavathy.

Table: 2.3: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) and the particular Theyyam who uses it.

2.11.2 *Mudi* (Head gear)

Mudi is highly significant among all embellishments in the Theyyam pantheon; it functions as the crown or halo for the deity. The process of placing or adorning the *mudi* (head gear) in front of the principal deity's idol generates an atmosphere of devotion in the minds of viewers throughout the event; this is referred to as "*mudiyettu.*"[43] After crowning, the deity's power acquires possession of the performer's body. From the beginning to the present, Theyyattam has continued to maintain a progression with organic elements in its material culture. It also manifests through mudi; rather than substituting a new or artificial substance, mudi developed into something more complicated, with additional components and a symbolic aesthetic embellished with cotton clothing. In these forms, including Gulikan and Pottan Theyyam, the traditional practice of employing delicate coconut leaves in headdresses prevails. In Theyyattam, its physical splendour is exactly as essential as its metaphysical power. The shape or form of the mudi influences the structural appearance of the form; consequently, it contributes to the distinctive characteristics of each Theyyam rather than any ornamentation. *vatta mudi, chatta mudi, pookatti mudi, purathattu kireedam, peeli mudi, valiya mudi, vazhayila mudi, pauv mudi, neela mudi, pothacha mudi, koombu mudi, omkaara mudi, paala mudi, pachila*

[43] Mudiyettu is a Kerala ceremonial theatrical and dance production based on the mythical combat between the goddess Kali and the demon Darika.

mudi, kothacha mudi, chavari mudi, kodu mudi, thiriyola mudi, koyyola, and others are well-known.

Making *mudi* (headgear) demands exclusive expertise. *Mudi's* structure and armature are constructed out of wooden planks and bamboo splices. These structures were then wrapped in tender palm leaves, textiles, flowers, and, in certain cases, peacock feathers and a silver diadem of a miniature serpent sculpture. The Theyyams, encompassing the categories of the Thai Paradevatha concept, portray Goddess Kali's shakti in furious form, such as Ashtamichal Bhagavathi, Pullakkal Bhagavathi, Porkkali Bhagavathi, and Mulavannur Bhagavathi, each of which employs the valiya mudi (large headgear). These *mudi* (headgear) extend to a height of 50 to 60 feet and are created out of areca palm stems and bamboo splices. The *kooda*, or fastening unit on the performer's head, is comparable to the word basket in Malayalam. After being placed on top of the head of the performer, *mudi* (headgear) receives assistance from long bamboos held by many different individuals to maintain equilibrium from all angles. These *mudi* (headgear) prevail over the entire Theyyam pantheon of goddesses with regard to size; every one of them stretches to the sky, like a temple shikara, with a precise breadth of three fingers at the top.

The *vatta mudi* (round headgear) is the second most prominent *mudi* (headgear) form, representing the majority of the furious mother goddesses' conceptions. As the name implies, the shape represents a circular form. This genre of mudi also makes extensive use of organic materials such as bamboo, areca palm slices, and *kuruthola* (tender palm fronds). The *mudi* (headgear) is particularly stylized with several flowers, such as *chethi poov* (jungle geranium, or biologically called Ixora coccinea), *mallika poov* (jasmine, or biologically called Jasminum multiflorum), and some floral *mudi* (headgear) garlands. The front part of this *mudi* (headgear) will be somewhat protruding outward. *vatta mudi* (round headgear) can also be integrated with various extra embellishments, such as *vattapathi, paarvalu,* flowers, and peacock feathers, in order to create a variety of *mudi* (headgear). For example, in the case of

Muchilottu Bhagavathy, in addition to the *vatta mudi* (round headgear), a *chendu thangi* will suspend from both sides, providing the goddess with distinct aspects, respectively. Approximately fifty mother goddesses, including Padarkulangara Bhagavathy, Narambil Bhagavathy, Puthiya Bhagavathy, Kanakkara Bhagavathy, and Angakkara Bhagavathy, have a circular shape, or *vatta mudi* (round headgear).

The *pookatti mudi* is placed on the heads of heroic male deities such as Kathivanur Veeran, Pada Veeran, Kannikkoru Makan, Vellur Gurukkal, Kaari Gurukkal, Gurukkal Theyyam, Payyamballi Chandu, and others. The *mudi* (headgear) is primarily constructed in *murukkumarm* (Indian Coral Tree), which is considered to be between sacred periods. Different components, such as *chenni pathi* and *puram kaani*, are initially attached to the *chethi poovu* (jungle geranium), before being assembled together with *pookatti*. The very term for this mudi refers to the act of tying flowers (*pooketti theerkuka*). Each sculpted component precisely adjoins and connects to a specific pattern that produces this mudi. On top of it, *mudi* (headgear) is embellished with peacock feathers and flower garlands. However, these *mudi* (headgear) are smaller in size compared to the female deity.

Chatta mudi is another important category of male-oriented deities. *chatta mudi* is formed by integrating numerous famous symbols, including the silver snake hood, crescent moon, *ottuminnu, payum pambu* (running snake), and *mokaalu*. It also has delicate palm leaves in the corners of a small semicircle, as well as ornaments like *parvalu, poram pali, vathira,* and so on. Even this *mudi* (headgear) appeared to be round in shape, but it has a thrust to the front. This particular type of Mudi is widely employed in the Pulikandan, Puliyoorukannan, and Kaalapuli theyyams.

Kothacha mudi, like *pookatti mudi*, is fashioned from the same material, *murikku maram* (Indian Coral Tree). Poomaruthan and Manikundan are two Theyyams that employ this kind of *mudi*.

The preponderance of embellishment in certain forms of *mudi* (headgear) contributes to their name. A specific sort of *mudi* (headgear) is the *peeli mudi* (peacock feather headgear), which is worn by Vetakkorumakan, Kannikkarumakan, and Urpazhassi. These headgears were predominantly embellished with peacock feathers, hence the name *peeli mudi* (Peacock Feather Headgear). This *mudi* (headgear) is commonly used for ancestor forms in Theyyam.

Thoppi chamayam is an additional kind of headgear that is primarily worn during male deities' *vellattams* (Performance narrations of each Theyyam genesis). However, in the instance of Velutha Bhootham Theyyam, this headdress is worn as *mudi* (headgear) with combinations of *thoppi* (cap), *nagapadam* (snake hood), *chennicheru, kathum kathila,* and *puram paali*; all of these geometrical forms of ornamentation are sculpted in *murukkumaram* (Indian coral tree). *thoppi* is placed on the performer's head, followed by *thalappali* and *thalappoo*. *kathum kathila*, made of *chethipoov* (jungle geranium), is tied next. The *naagapadam* (snake hood), adorned with the *chethiipoov*, is attached to the *chennicheru. purampaali* is the ornamentation put behind the head; following *purampali*, the combination of *naagapadam* and *chennicheru* is knotted on top of *thalapoov.* After all of the tying, it will give the *mudi* a finished look with its geometrical shapes. The Table 2.4 given below shows the details of mudi(headgear), and the particular Theyyam embellishes it.

	Thiru Mudi	**Theyyam**
1	*vatta mudi*	Kakkara Bhagavathy, Angakulangara Bhagavathy, Kannangattu Bhagavathy, Muchilottu Bhagavathy, Puthiya Bagavathy, Puliyur Kali.
2	*chatta mudi*	Puliyur Kannan, Kandampuli, Kalappuli, Pulimaruthan,
3	*valiya mudi*	Ashtamichal Bhagavathy, Pullakkal Bhagavathy, Kalariyaal Bhagavathy, Porkkali Bhagavathy, Mulavannur Bhagavathy, Padarkulangara Bhagavathy, Pazhassi Bhagavathy.
4	*purathu mudi*	Madiyil Chamundi, Raktha Chamundi, Moovalamkuzhi Chamundi, Raktheshwari, Panjuruli.
5	*kothacha mudi*	Palattudaivam, Perumbhuzhayachan, Vayanattu kulavan,
6	*peelimudi koombu*	Karinthiri Nayar, Uoorpazhassi, Veetaykorumakan,
7	*pookatti mudi*	Kathivannur Veeran, Maanicheridaivam, Tuluveeran, Karanon Theyyam, Kandanaar Kelan,
8	*pothacha mudi*	Poomaruthan, Vayirajathan, Palattudaivam.

9	*kumbu mudi*	Padveeran, Thoovakkaran,
10	*peelimudi*	Thekkan Kariyathan, Kannikkorumakan, Uoorpazhassi.
11	*neelam mudi*	Kshethrapalakan, Vallarkulangara, Porkali Bhagavathy.
12	*vellottu thoppi*	Aalichamundi, Vellattam.
13	*koyola mudi*	Pottan Theyyam, Gulikan
14	*thalamalliykku mele kireedam*	Vishnumoorthi

Table 2.4: *Mudi* (headgear) and the particular Theyyam who uses it.

2.12 The ritual of Theyyam *kettu* (Art of making Theyyam)

As stated previously, each of the Theyyams' performances enabled them to accomplish certain objectives while simultaneously satisfying the requirements of communities and individuals. Their primary objective is to venerate Devata and turn her shakti (or power) into the performer's physical body. In order to obtain the presence of the deity on the *kolam* (effigy of Theyyam), the performer and the specialists, who are seniors in the community, have to go through an extensive ritual. The process of Theyyam *kettu*, mirroring Arnold Van Gennep's in his seminal book Les Rituals de Passage, can be categorised into three stages: preliminary, liminal, and post-liminal rites. The earliest, or preliminary, phases of Theyyam can be characterised as the preparation of the performer's body for the transfer of shakti. This is the performer's *noyambu* (abstinence period), which may begin several days before the scheduled performance. The performer embraces the state of partial or complete seclusion, refraining from sexual desires, eating meat, and drinking alcohol in order to achieve a spiritual body bursting with mental and physical vigour. The second and most significant stage takes place at the performance venue, where the performer commences by accepting five wicks, such as *kodiyila* (end portion of banana leaf), a combination of rice, areca nuts, and betel

leaves. Furthermore, the preparation of the *kolam* (effigy of Theyyam) for transformation into a god commences. It includes the art of *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing), adornment and outfit preparation, and *varavili* (invocation). This ritual begins with thottam recitation (the deity's appeasing song), which the performer does in foundational attire the day preceding the performance. *Varavili,* the deity's invocation on the stool with the sacred sword covered in a red fabric, is included in the first portion of *thottam* (The legend was chanted before Theyyam's performance). After the *varavili*, the deity's *thottam* song is sung. Through this extensive depiction of the god, the performer gains access to the deity's shakti. This gradual transfer of the deity's possession to the performer's body can be referred to as the liminal phase, and the process is marked by a series of symbolic ceremonies. This is the liminal phase, during which the performer suspends conventional social rules in favour of specific procedures and observances. Furthermore, the third stage is referred to as the post-liminal time, which begins at the end of the Theyyam performance and involves returning shakti to the god from the performer's body. Giving up the sword and removing the headgear are two junctures that return the performer to normal life.

Shown below are details of the documentation of the process of Theyyam *Kettu* (the art of making of Theyyam) (see Figures given down below 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9).

Figure 2.3: The application of a base layer of water-based *chayilyam* (vermillion).

Figure 2.4: application of the drawings and pattern using the oil-based *chayilyam* (vermillion).

Figure 2.5: fastening the *oda kol* (two-stick structure) to the body of the performer to place the structures of *oda* and *mudi*.

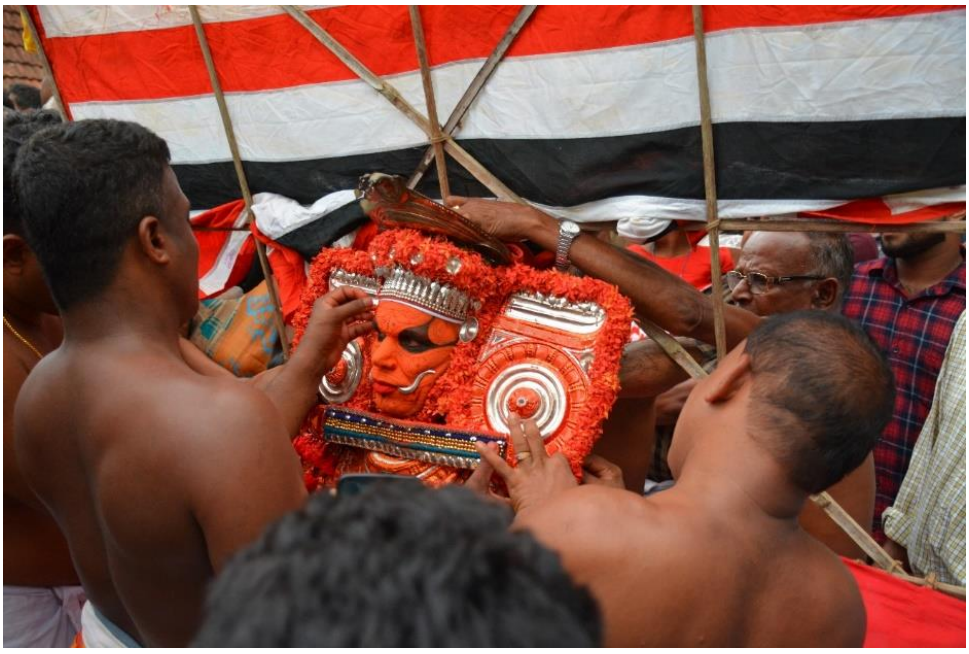

Figure 2.6: placing and tying of the *oda* (structure tied to waist for fastening *mudi* or headgear)

Figure 2.7: Theyyam after placing of *oda* (structure tied to waist for fastening *mudi* or headgear)

Figure 2.8: Fastening of *mudi* (headgear) over the head of performer.

Figure 2.9: fastening of *mudi* (headgear) with the help of Theyyam specialists.

Figure 2.9: Thiruvarkattu Bhagavathy Theyyam after placing all the embellishments.

2.13 Theyyam Embellishment materials and their usages.

Given below is Table 2.5, showing the details of the Theyyam embellishments and their usage.

SL. NO	Theyyam embellishments	Translation of the name	usages
1	*Angiyaaru*	*Angi* + *yaaru* (breast + threads)	It is an ornament that tied to near to breast of the deity, which is made out of treads and cloths. It is a

			meyyabharanam (ornamentation of body)
2	*Arayilkettu*	*Arayil* + *kettu* (waist + tying)	It is used as an ornamentation which tied to the waist portion of Theyyam; it is an *arachamayam* (ornamentation of waist)
3	*Olakaathu*	*Ola* + *kaathu* (------ + Ear)	It is an ornamentation that tied near to the both sides of the head of Theyyam. it is considered to be the ear of the deity. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head)
4	*Arinmbumala*	*Arimbu* + *mala* (Arimbu flower + garland)	It is the ornamentation that tied under the chin, which adjoins the pairs of olakaathu; it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head)
5	*Arayoda*	*Ara* + *oda* (waist + band)	It is an ornamentation that tied to the waist part of Theyyam; it is

			an *arachamayam* (ornamentation of waist). It is basically made by employing fire torch that placed over plantain trunk
6	*Chilambu*	Anklet	It is the anklet of Theyyam. it is mainly made out of copper, brass, or steel. it is a *kalkaru* (ornamentation of the leg).
7	*Chendadathangi*	*Chendada* + *thangi* (base of the mudi + support)	It is an ornamentation that tied adjacent to the side *olakaathu* which is near to both side of the Theyyam head portion. It is made by employing wood, threads, and cloths. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head)
8	*Chennimalaru*	*Chenni* + *malaru* (temple portion of head + flower)	It is an ornamentation that ornated near to the temple portion of the head of Theyyam.

			it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head)
9	*Chirattamulakootu*	*Chirattamula* + *koottu* (coconut shell breast + adjoining)	It is made in the shape of pairs of breasts of the deity, created by chiselling coral tree. It is a *meyyabharanam* (ornamentation of body)
10	*Cheyyakku*	*Cheyy* + *akku* (ear + ornament)	The ornament adorned closer to the ear. It is a symbolic representation of ear. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head).
11	*Kombolakathu*	*Komb* + *olakathu* (horn + hanging ear)	The embellishment ornated near to ear, which is a complex shape of horn and ear. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head).
12	*Ekiru*	*Ekiru* (Pseudo teeth)	The embellishment used to show the protruding teeth of the deity, pair of it is placed inside upper

			gum portion of the performer which protrude towards outside. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head).
13	*Choodakam*	Bracelet	It is the one of the bracelet embellishments of Theyyam, made with brass or silver. it is a *kaikaru* (ornamentation of hand).
14	*Kaithanda*	*Kai* + *thanda* (hand + bracelet)	it is another bracelet embellishment, which is made by carefully binding *chethi* flower (Ixora coccinea). it is a *kaikaru* (ornamentation of hand).
15	*Kaikoodu*	*Kai* + *koodu* (hand + cover)	it is the red cloth that covers the hand portion. it is a *kaikaru* (ornamentation of hand).

16	*Kadakam*	bangle	it is the bangle that made out of coral tree wooden piece, it is also decorated with lead foils. it is a *kaikaru* (ornamentation of hand).
17	*Poykannu*	*Poi* + *kannu* (pseudo + eye)	Adorn over the top the eye of the performer, which is made out of brass or silver. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head).
18	*Kazhuthilkettu*	*Kazhuth* + *kettu* (neck + tying)	It is the embellishment for the neck portion, made by chiselling coral treen wood. It is a *meyyabharanam* (ornamentation of body)
19	*Karinthaadi Meesa*	*Karinthaadi* + *meesa* (black beard + moustache)	It is the black beard of the deity; it is made from the hairs of the black goat or black coloured monkey. it is a *thalachamayam*

			(ornamentation of head).
20	*Thookkuthaadi*	*Thookku* + *thaadi* (hanging + beard)	It is the bread that towards the chest of the deity. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head).
21	*Kettupantham*	*Kettu* + *pantham* (tied + fire torch)	It is the fire torch the adjoin with the *aryoda* (embellishment over the waist). it is an *arachamayam* (ornamentation of waist).
22	*Marvattam*	*Mar* + *vattam* (breast + around)	It is the embellishment that represent the breast of the deity, which is made out of wood. It is a *meyyabharanam* (ornamentation of body)

23	*Thalapaali*	*Thala* + *paali* (head + portion)	It is the embellishment that adorn over the fore head of Theyyam, which is made out of white brass or silver. It has 21 metal pieces which represent the 21 masters of Theyyam. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head)
24	*Nakam*	nails	It is the embellishment made in the shape of nails with the *Kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds); it is adorned over the hand of Theyyam. it is a *kaikaru* (ornamentation of hand).
25	*Mughapaali*	*Mugham* + *paali* (face + mask/cover)	It is the face mask of the Theyyam, which is made out of brass or silver. it is a *thalachamayam*

			(ornamentation of head)
26	*Nagapadam*	Snake diadem	It is the metal snake embellishment, that adorn over the headgear. it is a *thalachamayam* (ornamentation of head)
27	*Oliyuduppu*	Leaf costume	It is the dress or costume made out of the *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds). It is a *meyyabharanam* (ornamentation of body)
28	*Vithaanathara*	Rectangular shape cloth costume	It is the rectangular dress that made out of cloth. it is an *arachamayam* (ornamentation of waist).

Table: 2.5: Theyyam embellishments and its usage.

Chapter III

Colour Symbolism of Mother Goddesses cult in Theyyam

3.1 Origin of mother goddess's cult

Since the Palaeolithic age, humans' most basic instinct has been to maintain and propagate life. The most critical variables are adequate reproduction and food supply. However, at the time, scientific understanding of nature's strength and resources was limited, and it was harsh on humanity's basic requirements for food and reproduction, making survival uncertain. As a result of this extremely difficult condition, societies have developed a strong belief in magico-religious practices. Researchers such as Mehta, Jaggi, Moore, and Zambotti trace the origins of the Magico-religious culture using archaeological evidence.

"Palaeolithic cultural stages: people usually lived in small groups, leading a life very close to that of wild beasts in an atmosphere pregnant with terror. That particular terror-oriented situation had its effect on the formation of the spiritual ideas and thinking's of primitive human beings"[44]

As part of this dynamic, at some point in time, a deep-rooted culture of idol worship developed, centred mostly on the feminine forms of idols. It eventually became the most widespread form of worship around the world, and it was shown more prominently than any other idol in practically every

[44] P. D, Mehta. *Early Indian Religious Thought*. 1956.pp. 17. also see in O. P, Jaggi. *Folk Medicine, History of Science and Technology in India*, Vol.III. 1973.pp.27; George F, Moore. *The Birth and Growth of Religion: Being the Morse Lectures of 1922*. 1923. pp. 9; Sibendu, Manna. *Mother Goddess Caṇḍī: Its Socio Ritual Impact on the Folk Life*. South Asia Books, 1993.

prehistoric community. The question is, why do exclusively female images become prominent in all civilisations at specific moments in time?

The answer lies in the most fundamental prerequisites for survival: an adequate quantity of food and the reproduction of children in communities that promote an uninterrupted existence. However, this is the time when hunting is insufficient to satisfy the needs of a growing population, encouraging the development of agriculture. When innovation was novel, women were the major figures and primary workforce, particularly in grain harvesting or cultivation during the Neolithic era. Prior to the appearance of technological innovations such as plough-drawn equipment, agriculture was managed by women while men went hunting. A lack of comprehension of both of these creative forces, such as offspring creation and agriculture, has elevated both to an inconceivable degree of abstraction. Because of this, the creative forces have been elevated to the rank of deities. To appease these cosmic forces, individuals frequently try to represent them as God. In other words, agriculture promotes the transition from a nomadic hunter lifestyle to a secure, settled life transmitted down through a matrilineal or female lineage. This notion encouraged ancient cultures to emphasise women above patriarchy or the hunting lifestyle. Likewise, the development of prominent mother goddess figures extended throughout the world.

3.2 Evolution and diffusion theories of Mother Goddess cult

The origins of the mother goddess' beliefs could have been traced all over the world, wherever humanity has travelled, and her image frequently appears as a symbol of the universal phenomena of reproduction and fertility. The accurate genesis of the notion and how it was transmitted are uncertain. However, according to archaeological information, Edwin Oliver James describes the diffusion of mother goddess worship in the following way:

"It was from western Asia, the south Russian plain, and the Valley of Don. Female figurines, commonly called Venuses, in bone, ivory, stone, and bas-relief, often with the natural organ grossly exaggerated, were introduced into

eastern and central Europe at the beginning of the upper Palaeolithic by an Asiatic migration in what is now known as Gravettian culture. With the transition from food gathering to food production, the female principle continued to predominate in the cultus that had grown up around the mysterious process of birth and generation." [45]

Every human civilisation emerged along the Mediterranean Sea's coastline, and in sections of Western Europe, such as Greece, Rome, and Crete, along with coastal places around and inside the Mediterranean, the female figure of the greater mother gained prominence. The concept was appreciated throughout the Indus Valley as it progressed. Mother goddesses rose to prominence with various titles in every pantheon, irrespective of culture. Even at important ancient sites such as Egypt and Babylon, there is a strong belief among the people that the cosmos began with female existence. As mother worship is the strong belief system of agrarian society, it is no longer unnatural to symbolise the earth and land as mother.

As a result, they equated her to the greatest known mother of all life in the universe, Earth. In agricultural society, it constructed not only economic structures that persisted in physical reality but also what the mother figure regards as the cornerstone of growth in a community's radical characteristics and norms, which assist individuals in becoming more conscious persons. It gives birth to a variety of thoughts that see female characteristics—breast, sexual organs, and so on—as symbols of procreative capability. The parallelism in reproductive capability between females and the prominent mother of all life, earth, allowed for the establishment of the archetype of earth as a mother goddess. Mother deities proved to be uncommon in India, a centuries-old agrarian culture. It has been present on the Indian mainland since ancient times, as it has in other regions of the world, and it continues to do so.

According to extensive archaeological evidence, the agrarian mother earth worshipper's religious system was eventually surpassed by the patriarchal

[45] Edwin O, James. *The Cult of the mother-goddess*. 1994.pp. 22

influences of pastoral community settlers. They established their dominance over the mother goddess' sovereignty over mother earth by following a patriarchal lifestyle that emphasised the worship of male gods. As a consequence, masculine authority takes precedence over female dominance. In many agrarian communities, people who worship the earth as goddesses are assimilated into other religious systems.

3.3 Mother Goddesses cult in India

The migration of Aryan male god worshippers superseded the pre-Vedic period's mother earth primacy in India's agrarian civilization. However, it was impossible to entirely change a belief that was so deeply ingrained in society. It is brought about through the simultaneous blending of two civilizations. As a result, earth deities such as Prithvi appeared in the Vedic Pantheon. As she became a member of the Vedic pantheon, her pre-eminence decreased, and she aligned with her male spouse, the Sky God known as Dyaus. During the Vedic period, they were considered a celestial couple: Prithvi, mother earth, and Dyaus, father sky of all life.

In southern India, the Shakthi or Devi manifests herself in various forms, including Mahishasura Mardhini, Kalarathri, Shailaputhri, Karthyaayani, Vana Durga, and Moola Durga. The renowned Tamil epic Silappatikaram was written at this point in time. The worship of Devi, or the deities of Kottavai, became prevalent in people's lives between the fifth and sixth centuries AD. The famous poet and author of Silappatikaram defines her as a fierce demon-slaying goddess. He reveals who she is through her triumphant form over the demonic buffalo, and he inserts her sacred trident into the animal's neck. Although Kottavai was a popular form, there were various types of mother goddess worship that flourished alongside or contemporaneously with it. These are native goddesses with an intense social orientation who have a strong connection to people's ordinary lifecycles. Other south Indian deities, among them Mallamma and Maariyamma, are among the most prominent. When it comes to Kerala's idol worship history, several kinds of mother goddess

devotion could be observed. According to some historical accounts, the pronounced Bhagavathy worship system emerged in ancient times, long before the impact of other male worship systems, particularly in Malabar regions.

The Dhanya Aradhana, or grain goddess worship system, is unavoidable in the ceremonies of the Theyyam pantheon. The worship pattern itself is concerned with grain growing, which may be a continuation of extremely ancient belief systems that date back to the origins of agricultural existence. The worship of grain goddesses developed with the objective of improving cultivation and significantly expanding agriculture. People used to appease the goddesses in many different ways, including animal sacrifice, to ensure successful grain growth.

3.3.1 *Dhanya Devatharadhana* (grain goddesses' worship)

On the Theyyam pantheon, rituals entitled "Nira" and "Nara" have been believed to be undertaken for the prosperity of excellent farming on the agricultural land. In north Kerala, the rites are performed at an auspicious time, just one month before the harvesting seasons commence. It comprises the symbolic depiction of an abundant quantity of grains in the measuring grain jar. On the day of the ceremony, the ritual specialists' journey to the fields and acquire one handful of tender grain before returning to the *kazhakkam* (the location of the Theyyam performance). The grains are gathered, coated with sandal powder, and then wrapped in banana leaves. These rolls of grain with leaves will afterwards be displayed in *palliyara* (Theyyam's makeover chamber) and inside the granaries. This hanging is also placed on the branches of sacred Banyan trees. It is believed that the ritual will help with prosperous and rich cultivation ahead of the harvesting season.

3.3.2 *Kanyaka* Theyyam (Virgin Goddesses)

The goddesses, who were highly adored as virgin women, held a dominant place in the cult. Despite their virginity, they are considered mother deities. The concept of the worship motif could be traced all over the world; in

Greek culture, she is known as "parthenogenetic. “The name Parthenos means "virgin" and genetic, or gignesthai, "to be born." To be "parthenogenetic," a goddess needs to be a primordial creatrix who creates the universe, earth, life, matter, and even other gods through her own essence and refrains from the support of a male consort. Numerous testimonials indicate that "in their earliest cults, before they were incorporated under patriarchal pantheons as the wives, sisters, and daughters of male gods, numerous female deities of the ancient Mediterranean world were indeed regarded as self-generating, virgin creatrixes.”[46] Evidence of virgin goddess beliefs may be found in the most prominent and modest civilisations across the world, including the Egyptian combat deity Neith and the ancient Greek goddess Athena, who are differentiated by their Parthenogenetic origins. The most significant cases of virgin goddesses in the earliest documented manuscript include Muchilottu Bhagavathy, Poomala Bhagavathy, Panchuruli Theyyam, Nagakanni, Kannimaani, Vengottu Bhagavathy, Punnakaal Bhagavathy, and Aayitti Bhagavathy, as well as Kannamangalam Bhagavathy.

3.4 Traditional Mother Goddesses worship of North Malabar

Every hamlet in north Malabar pays homage to the goddesses' shrines. Individuals used to worship these goddesses in particular ways, regardless of caste or class restrictions in these regions. In Kerala, clan goddesses representing all kingdoms and royal dynasties are often considered to worship the mother goddess, or Bhagavathy. Chirakkal King Rajah Kolathiri used to worship the idol of Madayikavil Bhagavathy. The Kings of Kottayam used to worship Sri Porkali Bhagavathy. Lokanarkavil Bhagavathy became Kolarthiris' worshipping divinity in the Kadathanad region, whereas Thirumandamkunnil Bhagavathy became the idol in the Valluvanadu region.

Each small village goddess, as mentioned previously under the administration of this kingdom, is unlikely to have numerous elaborate temples; their idols are made of stone or a wooden piece with a basic representation of

[46] M, Rigoglioso. *Virgin Mother Goddesses of Antiquity*. Springer, 2010.

goddesses, who are generally worshipped beneath sacred trees alongside a weapon, occasionally a spear or trident. There will be an animal sculpture in front of these statues that is considered to represent the vehicle of deities. According to legend, goddesses used to roam around the village and surrounding region at night. They chose to name it after the name of the area and were renowned as the village's chief protectors. These idols are crucial to the formation and progression of Theyyam religious performances. In north Malabar, the holy sanctuaries of goddesses, or Bhagavathy, are known as *kazhakkam* (Location of Theyyam performance), and Theyyam is performed to appease her divine might.

The principal classification in the Theyyam pantheon is the worship of mother goddesses, frequently referred to as Bhagavathy. It encompasses nearly ninety percent of the pantheon and possesses a distinct identity from all other divisions. Its uniqueness is demonstrated through its representation of face writing, head gear, and apparel. Since the very beginning, these Theyyams have been carefully designed in a unique way to express previous concepts and pave the way towards the future. These shapes embody ancient society's traditional aesthetic and can express a variety of historical themes. Here are some notable Theyyams and their artistic effect on society.

3.4.1 Kurathi Theyyam

Kurathi Theyyam is a particularly representative form of north Kerala's native traditional mother goddess worship. She has been known by several names, including Kunharu Kurathi, Mala Kurathi, Thekkan Kurathi, Pulli Kurathi, and Sevakari. She is seen as a guardian of agricultural cultivation and development; she considers herself to be the protector of agricultural products from theft. All these circumstances show the Kurathi’s deep relationship with the ancient agrarian society and land. In thottam songs, Kunharu Kurathi and Pulli Kurathi are described as the daughters of Sri Parvathi, Shiva's wife. In thottam literature, she is represented as the protector from small pox, having protected a merchant from acute small pox while journeying to Kodaku in

Karnataka. After returning to his home, he gave her space, or Stanam, to worship in places like Thali Parambu and so on. Because of this, she still considers herself a protector from smallpox. The story of this deity suggests her relationship with the Karnataka region.

According to Kurathi beliefs, the portrayal of her divine power differs significantly from Thottam. Her sacred power is believed to have extended from Tulunadu to Alladath 'Swaroopam' as she paid a visit to the feudal ruler of Adiyerinadu. Thirsty Kurathi asked the ruler for milk or water; despite having barns full of cows, he refused to give anything to her. He responded to her by claiming that she disrespected his status and insulted him by addressing him merely by his family name. As a result of the incident, Adiyeri's cows and the cattle boy did not return after grazing until almost midnight. The servants who searched for the cows and the cattle boy were surprised by what they discovered: all of the cattle had turned to stone. When they returned to verify everything in the cow barn, they saw a bamboo tree encircled by snakes. The dreaded lord summoned an astrologer to determine what had happened to his livestock. He recognised that problems emerged as a consequence of Kurathi's curse and therefore recommended various solutions to ease the problems. This implies considering the inclusive Kurathi as goddesses and worshipping them in a specifically designated sanctified sanctuary. After listening to the answer and agreeing with the astrologer, Adiyeri met Kurathi's wishes and addressed all of the concerns. The cattle that had transformed into stone returned to his cow barn, and Kurathi received the first milk from them. She has since become a deity in the Theyyam pantheon of northern Kerala. Kurathi belief systems and rituals are an excellent representation of local society's historic norms and traditions (see the Figure 3.1 and 3.2 given below).

Figure 3.1 and 3.2: showing the ritualistic performance of Kurathi Theyyam.

There are eighteen different types of Kurathi that are performed; some of them are Kunjar Kurathi, Maarana Kurathi, Thekkan Kurathi, Vadakkan Kurathi, Malam Kurathi, Aani Kurathi, Vishnu Kurathi, Seva Kurathi, Pulli

Kurathi, Palae Kurathi, and Anthi Kurathi; they differ slightly from one another. Most kurathi don't feature a sheer-sized mudi but rather a more compact, designed counterpart of the larger vatta mudi found on other mother goddesses. Some of the mudi is embellished with natural materials, such as delicate palm leaves, which have long been used in the traditional mudi (headdress)-creating technique. Kurathi's other distinctive feature is its unique face ornamentation, which varies in design. Kurathi's mouth is embellished with a fake mouth with a steel tongue. In certain repeats, it features a separate artificial nose and steel eyes. The extravagant decorations closely mirror Karnataka's Bootha Kolam.

Figure 3.3 and 3.4: Performance of Kurathi Theyyam.

The above Figures 3.3 and 3.4 show the Kurathi Theyyams ritualistic performance with all the embellishments. The torso of the Theyyam is adorned with breast plates, which are often worn to demonstrate the Theyyam's feminine aspect. Most Kurathi Theyyam breast plates are composed of coconut shell or wooden pieces; however, metals such as copper and brass are also used in rare circumstances. When it comes to the costume, the Theyyam are usually adorned with cotton cloths and *Kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds). Kurathi Theyyam's

mukathezhuthu is a simplistic one with very minimal lines and circles (see given below Figure 3.5)

Figure 3.5: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kurathi Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

3.5 *Grama Devathamar* (Village Goddesses)

Several mother goddesses were worshipped at the Theyyam ceremonies. Oral tradition characterises village goddesses as celestial mother goddesses who protect and take care of the community. Their names are recognised together with the names of their respective villages. Even though these village gods have a mostly identical appearance, the minute details and ornamental components distinguish them in a simple way. Padarkulangara, Vllarkulangar, Dhandiyanganam, Narambil, Angakullangara, Cherralathu, Echikkulangara, Kotholi, Oochulikadavathu, Eranjikkal, Elambachi, Kamballoor, Chekkipara, Kadappurathu, Panachira, Chembilottu, Aayitti, Kanakkara, Karakkayil, Mekkottu, and Chooliyar are places associated with village divinities and venerated in certain localities. The worship pattern is primarily designed to preserve the structure and traditions of the culture that the deity symbolises. The

majority of these goddesses are now associated with Shakta concepts, primarily the Mahishasura mardhini. Vallarkulangar Bhagavathy, Angakkulangara Bhagavathy, and Echikkulangara Bhagavathy are some of the more prominent examples. The defeat of evil forces is frequently recited in these goddesses' thottam songs. Some Chamundi religions involve regional goddesses. It is plausible to hypothesise that the ancient worship of mother goddesses transformed into village deities throughout time. These old deities may now be identified by village or regional monikers and worshipped as Bhagavathy or Chamundi.

3.6 Victim incarnated goddesses after death

These are narratives of real-life female figures who took on the goddess form after death. Muchilottu Bhagavathi, Maakam Bhagavathy, Vannathi Bhagavathy, Chitteyi Bhagavathy, Kelangara Bhagavathy, Maniyara Unnaga, Thotumkara Bhagavathy, Ummachi Bhagavathy, Illathamma, Manayail Pothi, Kappalathi Pothi, and others are the principal goddesses of their kind.

3.6.1 Muchilotu Bhagavathy

Muchilotu Bhagavathy's mudi falls under the category of *vatta mudi* and is thought to have been made specifically for her by Manakaadan Gurukkal. However, in later times, the mudi became prevalent in various of the mother goddesses' manifestations. The mudi for this Theyyam is usually fashioned from small splices of areca palm stem and bamboo, making it flexible and lightweight. The design is based on the Malayalam letter 'ra', which resembles a semicircle. According to Manakaadan Gurukkal's imagination, Muchilottiu Bhagavathy's genesis is believed to stem from mother earth and the surrounding universe. In order to complete this notion, the artist metaphorically embellished mudi with *poomaala* (flower garland), *thakidu* (copper foils), *chethi poovu* (jungle flame flowers), *mallika poovu* (Jasmine flower), and other elements. The half-semicircle shape consists of symbolic representations of the entire galaxy and universe. It is claimed to consist of the stars, sky, earth, seas, and white

milky water bodies filled with water lilies. Muchilottu Bhagavathy can be identified by the presence of two *dhamshtra* (pseudo teeth) and a silver plate covering the eyes. Throughout the performance, she wields a sword and shield, and in rare cases, she bears a pair of flaming torches. Although these props give the Bhagavathy an emotive appearance, Yet the narrative takes a different turn; it features a sad heroine as well as hostile deities.

The narrative revolves around the awful tale of a Namboothiri girl who resided in Perinchellore, presently referred to as Taliparambu. According to the narrative, the girl, who was a virgin, claimed that sex is a beautiful and joyous experience in life. A fellow community member felt offended by these words and excommunicated her for questioning her virginity. In order to demonstrate her innocence in front of the audience, she stood adjacent to a heap of firewood at Rayaramangalam Temple. In this circumstance, the girl is utterly devastated, goes near the flames, and breaks down to self-immolate. According to the narrative, at that moment, a Thiyya approached with a bunch of delicate coconuts, and a female requested that he quench her thirst. But the individual departed without listening. After this, an oil merchant arrived. He was delivering the oil to the Shiva temple at Karivellur, identified as Karivellurappan, whom she had requested to alleviate her feelings of sorrow and demonstrate her purity. The girl demands that the oil monger pour extra oil so that the fire burns stronger. The oil monger was surprised by the girl's fast thinking and determination, and he hastily poured the oil onto the fire stack. She was satisfied with the oil monger's offering, and she died, leaving her remains in oil urns. She felt pleased by the oil monger's offering, and she passed away, leaving her remains in oil urns. Finally, when the oil monger arrived at the temple with an urn of ash, it was brimming with oil. According to legend, Karivellurappan and his consort Rayaramangalam Bhagavathy blessed her self-immolated soul and transformed her into Bhagavathy's glorious form.

Later on, the girl appeared in Bhagavathy form, with her anklet flickering inside the well of Kolathiri’s warrior while he was taking water. He

worshipped her and installed a *stanam* in her honour, naming her Muchilottu from that moment on. Bhagavathy and *the* Vaniyar caste worshipped her as the community's main deity. The deity is also worshipped as a protector from several contagious diseases.

This account clearly demonstrates that the worship of the deity Muchilottu Bhagavathy occurred as a result of society's profound grief following her self-immolation. It's possible that the remorse of those who opposed the girl's right to exist and express her opinions led them to believe that the illnesses were caused by her curse. The story of Adiyogi from Kunnamangalam depicts this anxiety. It is said that after rejecting Muchilotu Bhagavathy's divinity, she summoned smallpox and performed supernatural events. Following this encounter, he became a devout follower of the deity.

The deity is a prime example of *sattvika bhavam* (compassionate expression) in the Bhagavathy beliefs of Theyyam. The artist appears to have developed this shape out of passionate affection, with most of it being based on the girl's mental suffering, which resulted in a selfless gesture by her. Muchilottu Bhagavathy, like all other Bhagavathy figures in the Theyyam pantheon, wears only red. Except for a few embellishments, this goddess's outfit is all red. The predominant red colour in the instance of Muchilottu Bhagavathy might be understood as a symbol of death and women's fidelity. As the narrative points out, the red symbolism might be dual in nature. The vast majority of the gods and goddesses in the Theyyam religion have a connection to death, but red, as a symbol of women's (the deified state's) purity in society, is a discrete identity. According to the source, *mukathezhuthu* is the fundamental and undying tradition of Theyyam. The genesis of abstinence with red symbolism may be traced back to its material. The principal component in the dark red hue is *chayilyam* (vermilion), which is made from powdered red cinnabar. The substance is widely used in Hinduism across the Indian subcontinent. Hindu women mostly employ the material to express their unique identities and connection to their cultural traditions.

Muchilottu Bhagavathy's *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) is commonly referred to as *prakezhuthu*, and the writing on the eye resembles that of a pigeon. While painstakingly scrutinising *prakezhuthu*, just one image of two pigeons sitting opposite one another and feeding their young becomes apparent. The image of a pigeon in Muchilottu Bhagavathy was supposed to give the god a Sattvic appearance. However, the artist's prior depiction of the pigeon family may have been aimed at helping to commiserate with the girl's unfulfilled desire for a familial or marital life (see Figure 3.6 given down below).

Figure 3.6: *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Muchilottu Bhagavathy, drawn by the researcher.

However, individuals who replicate this with a perfect pattern may subsequently lose sight of what it is conveying. Unlike other Bhagavathy Theyyam, Muchilotu Bhagavathy's *mular* (breast plate), is completely indistinguishable due to the abundance of jewellery covering it. It might be due to the communal identity that Muchilotu Bhagavathy possesses. According to the narrative, the deified girl is from the Namboothiri community. This sort of scenario may be traceable back to the historical records of Kerala, which demonstrate that upper-caste women have had the privilege to conceal their

breasts since the Middle Ages. So, conceptualising her deity image by displaying the breast may be inappropriate.

3.6.2 Kandangotu Makkam

Kandangotu Makkam's testimony describes the same scenario that Muchilotu Bhagavathy experienced. She is the victim of deceptive accusations put forward by others out of prejudice and envy. The Bhagavathy, also known as Makkam Poti (another synonym for Bhagavathy), performs in abandoned houses and paddy fields because locals believe the Theyyam jeopardises the homes where it is performed. Theyyam and her children, Cheeru and Chathu, accompanied Makkam Poti in performing. The Vannan caste performs Theyyam in the regions of Kuthuparambu, Mavilayi, Kunhimangalam, Pilathara, and Chembilode. Chembilode is the permanent shrine for the goddesses.

As previously stated, the narrative focuses on Makkam's tragic demise as the consequence of a resentment-fuelled blame game by her siblings' wives. Kandangotu was born into a Nambiar-caste household in Payyanur and is the beloved sole sister of twelve brothers. Their blind affection and admiration provoke envy and resentment towards Makkam. They were searching for an excuse to blame her and jeopardise their husband's trust in her. Makkam's brothers ventured out for a battle one day as Kolathiri's Warriors. Vaniyan Emman, an oil vendor, visited the residence for his usual sales. However, Makkam was in her menstrual cycle, and her sister-in-law was not present. She requested the oil seller place the jar in one corner of the room. While one of her sisters-in-law notices the oil vendor entering the room, they consider it a chance to undermine the husband's trust in their sister. So, as their husbands return from battle, they hear fabricated stories about their sister's adultery. Anguished brothers acknowledged killing their sister, who had ruined the family reputation and caused dishonour. Because they do not want to kill her at their house, they pretend nothing has occurred and bring her and her children to join them for a performance at a remote temple. However, Makkam remains sceptical of his brother's behaviour during his travels.

So, on her journey, she prayed to Ellatath Bhagavathy for help. Bhagavathy surreptitiously accompanied Makkam after realising her innocence. She informed her brothers about her thirst while journeying and passing by a large house in Chalavayal. With the permission of her brothers, she moved towards the house. When family members realise, she is from the Kandangatu family, they serve her milk instead of water. The act of generosity by family members pleased her, so she offered her valuables there, promising to drink milk again after she returned. Soon after that, Makkam and her brothers continued their journey to Kaayalode.

When they arrived at the site, the brothers immediately prepared to murder their sister. It is a vast, abandoned region surrounded by woodlands, with just one well. When Makkam approaches the well to provide the kids with water, they allow her to do so. Then, as she proceeds to get some water, one of her brother's remarks, "Look at the sky; how is it possible there is a star in this noontime?" When she looks up, one of them cuts off her head, then her body, and throws everything down the well. Fulfilled brothers returned to their family residence, believing they had honoured the commitment regarding the family's positioning. However, the heinous murder haunted some of the brothers, and they soon began arguing and attacking each other about the injustice they did against their sister. Finally, as a consequence of this perplexing disagreement, they slay each other in a massive battle. Meanwhile, the restless spirit of Makkam began to act unpleasantly near the site where she was killed. When a Mayilan approaches, he hears a hum and gazes into it. Unexpectedly, Makkam's spirit grabbed him at the well. Additionally, Elladath Bhagavathy, who accompanies Makkam in disguise, takes her to Kottiyur to get a blessing from Shiva. He blessed her and gave her the divine position and title of Makkam Bhagavathy to stop the abnormal activities.

Makkam's *mudi* is in the *vatta mudi* style, with a red background colour. However, the borders were predominantly decorated with tender palm leaves. The addition of tender palm leaves to the upper edges of mudi constitutes wonderful art. Because when seen in a lamplight in the dark of night, Mudi

radiates in a manner equivalent to hallow. In addition, the top of the mudi has been adorned with sixteen burning fire torches, which add to the hallo's radiance. Although Makkam Bhagavathy's figure is mostly covered with tender palm leaves, her overall colour is a light shade of green. However, it cannot overpower the red hues that embellish multiple areas of the mudi, *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawings), and *mular* (breastplate). The red portion of mudi is beautifully adorned with flower garlands, primarily of *chethi poov* (Jungle geranium).

The *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawings) of most goddesses wearing circular headpieces is known as "*shankhum vairadhalavum*." The other most common *mukamezhuth*, coupled with spherical headgear, is *shankhum valum*, or *nagam thathiezhuthu*. According to this finding, the majority of mother goddess face-drawing styles use significant *shankhu* (conch shell) symbols (see Figure 3.7 given down below).

Figure 3.7: *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kandangotu Makkam, drawn by the researcher.

The portrayal of *shankhu*, which is well-known as a Hindu religious symbol from the historic past, serves as a vital aspect of both its materialistic and spiritual qualities. Its metaphysical form symbolises the cosmic expanse of sound and the divine gem. Although the image of *shankhu* may be seen in numerous cases in Hinduism dating back to historical periods, in the case of *mukathezhuthu*, the representation shows the resemblance between the conch shell and Makkam Bhagavathy's eyes. In other words, the artist is comparing Makkam Bhagavathi's eyes to conch shells, establishing a natural work of art.

3.7 *Yudha Moorthikal* (War goddesses)

War goddesses constitute a sect of goddesses who are manifested to fulfil their divine purpose. They embody the potential to restore justice and dharma by annihilating the powers of evil. First and foremost, in this category, we must take into account the mythology of Thai Paradevatha, who incarnated to eliminate Darikran during the Devasura War. These goddesses, known by various names depending on the village, like Moovalankuzhi Chamundi, Kakkara Bhagavathy, Raktha Chamundi, Veera Chamundi, Angakulangara Bhagavathy, Narambil Bhagavathy, Raktheswari, Padakkethi Bhagavathy, Uthira Chanundi, Anthimahakali, Kundora Chamundi, Karinkali, Oravankara Bhagavathy, Chattiyoor Bhagavathy, Madayil Chamundi, Korakottu Bhagavathy, Padamadakithampurati, Uthirakali, Padakali, Chorakalathil Bhagavathy, Neelamkai Chamundi, Veerakali, Koopol Chamundi, and Puthiya Bhagavathy, are also destined to be slayers and battle in the conflict.

3.7.1 Chamundi worship

Several distinct Chamundi beliefs emerged in north Kerala. They vary in terms of place names and other features and can be observed in a wide variety of places. These goddesses are viewed as a divine force that preserves a country's or society's prosperity amidst repeated encounters with evil forces. As a result, Chamundi’s are firmly established in the human psyche. Chamundi, compared to other goddesses, seem frustrated and exhibit a fiery personality.

The name Chamundi stems from the notion that she murdered the demonic lords Chandan and Mundan in order to restore harmony against their atrocious karma. During the Kaliyattam time frame, the Theyyam pantheon ritually performed various types of Chamundi, particularly significant in Shakti or Bhagavathy worship.

3.7.1.1 Karim Chamundi

Deity is described in the Devi Bhagavatham as a slayer of demon kings and asuras. Karim Chamundi is also known as Kalikambika. She is believed to be the form of Shakthi, and she was given the name Karim Chamundi because of her furious, dark, clouded appearance when she started killing evil entities. The name Karim or Kari is associated with the dark, foggy colour. It is also said that Karim Chamundi arrived with Someshwari Devi to look after the inhabitants of Malanadu. Karim Chamundi reappears in the thottam songs of Paayathu Onbathaal thottam, which glorify nine goddesses. It includes nine gods and goddesses: Parava Chamundi, Pulli Pothi, Mootha Chamundi, Ilaya Chamundi, Karim Chamundi, Vaduvakutti, Kayamkulathamma, and Changolam Veeran.

Karim Chamundi's makeover and clothing are intricately crafted with delicate palm leaves, demonstrating the unaltered traditional makeover accomplished through native expertise. The employment of *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) in headgear is observed alongside the small complex of metal snake heads, symbolising the influence of snake worship. The *mukamezhuthu* lacks elaborate patterns, but it does demonstrate accurate execution of colour combinations such as white, black, and red. The eyes are drawn in the form of a circle in black, while a similar pattern of shape is employed over the lips in red (see Figure 3.8 given down below).

Figure 3.8: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Karim Chamundi Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

Additionally, an intense white highlighting colour has been applied to the eyes and lips, giving the shape a more furious appearance. Karim Chamundi's ensemble, which is constructed exclusively of tender leaves of coconut, begins at the breast and extends all the way to the feet.

3.7.1.2 Pula Chamundi

Pula Chamundi, a character in the story's narrative, believes that the caste and class systems have detrimental effects on people. The narrative emphasises the profound societal value that all Theyyams have accomplished for the betterment of humanity. Chamundi worship is no exception to this paradigm. The anecdote illustrates the way the great Shankaracharya valued knowledge and intelligence. While on the quest to Mount "*sarvanknja peedam*," or the supreme end of all knowledge, Shiva Parvathy and Nadikesan approach Shankaracharya disguised as a dalit hunting family. According to the text, Parvathy disguised himself as Pula Chamundi, then appeared with Shiva as Pula Pottan and Nandikesan as Pula Maruthan, who disrupted Shankaracharya's

route. Shankaracharya does not want to be polluted by lower-caste hunting families; therefore, he demands that they leave his path. Hearing this, Shiva and Parvathy, dressed as Pula Pottan and Pula Chamundi, debated with Shankaracharya. The initial argument contends that caste and class structures are irrelevant, causing mankind to become senseless. These important lessons are conveyed in thottam songs, which, in a few lines, challenge Shankaracharya's devotion towards humanity.

"*neenkal murinjaalum chorayalle chovveru*

Naankal murinjaalum chorayalle chovveru"

Meaning, "If you have a wound, blood only oozes out, which is red in colour,

and if I got wound blood only oozes out, which is also red in colour"

The message implies that people are the same. Everyone's blood is identical in colour: red.

Theyyam's makeover indicates visual commonalities between Karim Chamundi and Pula Chamundi. These Theyyams are identical in both clothing and *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing). Costumes and accessories are typically made from delicate palm leaves with exceptional craftsmanship.

The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) is especially designed to convey the expressive and tranquil gesture of Pula Chamundi, which is written in three colours, such as red, black, and white, to signify symbolism (see Figure 3.9 given down below).

Figure 3.9: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Pula Chamundi, drawn by the researcher.

It appears to be the same as the Karim Chamundi design, but the region painted in light red on the cheek of the Theyyam, which is made from a combination of *manayola* (orpiment) and *chayillyam* (vermillion), is embellished with pleasant floral motifs. This floral pattern gives Pula Chamundi a sattvic, or serene, expression, which is compatible with Theyyam's assertion that she is not aggressive. Another key symbolism is the snake heads on top of headdresses, which allude to the Theyyams' impact on Kerala's snake worship.

3.7.1.3 Raktha Chamundi

According to legend, Rakthabeejasuran, who could multiply his forms with every drop of blood, confused the goddess Ambika while slaying him. She requested that Shiva provide assistance in this perilous predicament. Furious Shiva opened his third eye and gave birth to Raktha Chamundi, who slew all of the asuras. The word *raktha/raktham* (which means blood) reflects the goddesses' expressiveness. According to her birth destiny, after defeating the demon Rakthabeejasuran, the enraged Chamundi swallowed all of the blood as

a victory gesture. This resulted in her name beginning with *raktha*, meaning blood. In the thottam song, she is also described as the slayer of the demon Darikan.

She is also known by different names according to her area of worship, her mystical and divine activities, and the name of her village. Such forms are Veera Chamundi, Neelankai Chamundi, Kaaricheri Chamundi, Karel Chamundi, Ayiramthengil Chamundi, Kuttikara Chamundi, Edappana Chamundi, Pladukka Chamundi, Muttiyara Chamundi, Periyattu Chamundi, Balicheri Chamundi, Kizhakkera Chamundi, etc.

Because she is an expressive figure in Bhagavathy, her effigy is embellished with *purathatta mudi*, which serves as an essential symbolic visual depiction in the formation of the furious form. In the setting of Raktha Chamundi, the *mudi* functions more as a halo than as headgear. Its second major significance is the symbolism of the half crescent moon, which prevails like a halo over the *mudi* of Raktha Chamundi. Despite being a fiery figure, she certainly represents beauty in various interpretations. The peacock feather on the borders of her headgear is an example of such sensitive embellishments, which serve as a soothing edge to the goddess's hair. Raktha Chamundi's *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) features delicate portrayals of Sattvic beauty intermingled with ferocious emotion (See Figure 3.10 given below).

Figure 3.10: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Raktha chamundi, drawn by the researcher.

Raktha Chamundi's breast plate, known as *marummula*, is another intricate and stylized adornment. This style of *maarchamayam* (breast ornamentation) is mostly found on the torsos and breasts of goddesses. The visual symbolism primarily serves as a fertility symbol in every interpretation of the Mother Goddess. The ornamentation here represents her feminine personality as well as her ability for creation and conservation of nature. All of this visual symbolism unambiguously suggests that the artist is attempting to show Rakth Chamundi as an attribute that assists in reconciling the two opposing poles of nature. She can be both furious and tranquil; she is both kind and malicious; or, to put it another way, she is both a destroying force and a nourisher, much like mother earth. She is both furious and tranquil; she is both compassionate and malicious, or, to put it another way, she is both a destroying force and a nourisher, reminiscent of mother earth.

3.7.1.4 Kundor Chamundi

The thottam songs of the goddess Kundor Chamundi describe the story of Darika, the tyrant king assassinated by Kundor Chamundi. She evolved from Shiva's furious third eye in order to help bring everyone universal peace. According to the narrative, Kundor Chamundi ascends to the summit of Vedhalam to battle Darikan. The conflict extended for seven days and nights and resulted in Darikan's death. Darikan's assassination is utterly bizarre in its circumstances, since Kundor Chamundi did it on top of the tongue spread by Vedhalam.

The goddesses are distinguishable by their facial masks, which cover the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing). The face mask is placed over *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) for a short period of time before being removed.

Figure 3.11: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kundor Chamundi, drawn by the researcher.

The Figure 3.11 above shows the drawing of the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kundoor Chamundi Theyyam with simplistic pattern. *Mukathezhuth* (face drawing) of Kundor Chamundi falls within the category of

chayillya thep, which includes the application of vermillion. It is a simplified portrayal of face-writing procedures with minimal attention to detail. The foundation colour, a pale red, is created through the combination of *manayola* and *chayillyam* (vermillion). The use of a face mask during ritual performances is considered to be a distinctive characteristic of ancient traditional performances in north Kerala. Velan's performance strengthens the justification. Kundor Chamundi performances, like those of other Velan communities, incorporate the employment of an extensive variety of primitive musical instruments.

Following the placement of the foundational pigment, the dark gradient of red vermillion itself is applied. The combination of the red gradients adorns the goddesses' characteristics with expressiveness.

Like the previously mentioned Raktha Chamundi, Kundor Chamundi also possesses *maankannu,* a form that embodies both fury and calmness simultaneously. In other words, it renders the goddesses both destructive and beneficial.

Kundor Chamundi's mudi, often designated as *chattamudi,* is comparable to Raktha Chamundi. However, the decoration and symbolic representations are slightly different. Even the commonalities, such as the peacock feather and the half crescent, are present in both instances. However, Kundor Chamundi's Mudi is conceptualised in a remarkably basic way. Her large, circular mudi is decorated with extra *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) that stretch widely to the bottom. The top of the head is ornamented with seven cobra heads, a representation of snake worship.

Her breast plate is exceptional in creation and known as *vellottu marummula,* which indicates that it was created out of *vellottu* (white bronze). Its form comprises a breast and an abdomen, both embellished with snake iconography. The breast plate's symbolism may symbolise femme fatale beauty. Overall, the Theyyam Kundor Chamundi has been adorned with more delicate palm leaves instead of cotton. This also demonstrates an earlier time period.

3.8 *Manthra moorthikal* (magical idol Theyyam)

Manthra moorthikal (magical idols) are Theyyams established under magical idols in order to fulfil specific requirements and objectives in communities' life cycles. Each and every one of these Theyyams maintains its own set of ceremonies. Kurathi, Uchitta, Karaval Bhagavathy, and Dhumra Bhagavathi are the main examples of this. In them, the Malayan community performs Uchitta with exquisite *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) and sophisticated costumes. Uchitta is additionally known as Vadakkini Bhagavathy. Theyyam is venerated as a goddess to protect the mother and child throughout pregnancy and delivery. On the contrary, Karuval Bhagavathy is believed to be Kuttichathan's sister and is revered as the goddess of abortion. While Dhumra Bhagavathy has been considered to be Parma Shiva's daughter, she emerged from the flames after he summoned her three times to slaughter the asura (evil) destroyer of the universe known as Dhumrasuran. Dhumra Bhagavathi is another aspect of Raktha Chamundi.

3.9 *Naayattu devathamaar* (Hunting goddesses)

This classification of Theyyam discusses the belief system of the ancient ancestors' archaic and primordial ways of life, during which they utilised hunting and fishing for subsistence. Some of the Theyyam are god and goddess idols that people worship with the expectation of obtaining divine benefits that make hunting simpler and more efficient. This group includes just a few female deities, the most notable of whom is Mavila Kurathi. The mighty hunter Shiva, also known as Pasupathi, influenced most hunting deities and legends.

3.10 *Vana devathamaar* (Forest deities)

These Theyyam sects constitute deities based on natural forces, which include air, water, lakes, forests, trees, flowers, caverns, and so on, which our predecessors worshipped in the wilderness of the forest for respite from hardships and ease in their lifecycle. Even now, many tribes safeguard the traditional lifestyle and belief system, allowing them to thrive during difficult

times. Madayil Bhagavathy, Malappil Bhagavathy, Kallurutti, Katuchirakathu Bhagavathy, Kattumadantha, and Pullapothi belong to the hunting deities demonstrated in the examples.

3.11 *Rokakaarikalaya Devathamaar* (diseases inflicting goddesses)

These Theyyam sects primarily treat or prevent conditions such as impairment, smallpox, and fever. According to Theyyam's old belief system, ailments originate from disrespecting the individual deities of the diseases and their subsequent wrath. Thus, to heal the ailments of individuals and enhance community prosperity, various offerings and worships are made to appease the respective deities in the form of Theyyam. The majority of the deities are based on the legends of Parma Shiva. Small pox is considered to have been created by the deities known as Cheerbha Moothaval (older) and Cheerbha Ilayaval (younger), both of whom were sent to Earth by Param Shiva. They have been sent to earth to satiate their insatiable appetite for blood, despite having consumed millions of roosters and elephant heads. It is believed that these bloodthirsty deities show up in human beings' lives in the form of smallpox. To appease these goddesses and ward off smallpox, mankind used to worship them. Vasoorimala, Karkidothi, Thoovakali, and Kalichi are some of the main deities in this category.

3.12 *Urvarya Devathamar* (fertility Goddesses)

This particular type of Theyyam is venerated in order to bring prosperity to agriculture and fertility to the land. Famous cultures revere fertile soil as a mother and consider agriculture as a sacred means of life. In Theyyam, such deities have the responsibility to preserve agriculture and livestock. They prevent calamities and destruction that take place throughout the year with the objective of achieving agricultural success. Thorakarathi, Kalichi, Kurathi, Marutha, Karkidothi, and Kanni.

3.13 Formal and Structural symbolism of Mother Goddesses

The mother deities' formal and structural symbolism is predominantly governed by their *mudi* (headgear) and the Theyyam apparel they adorn. It provides the specific Theyyam with the appropriate shape and form; they are generally idealistic in character and suitable for reverence. Even though there are several ornamentations, it exudes an auspicious appearance. Certain fundamental forms have a history of metaphysical entities used to determine the reality of the cosmos and the power of the unknown, or God. These natural cosmic forms and signs have been, for centuries, an important aspect of the Theyyam sacred performance, which aspires to provide an extrasensory experience and an auspicious appearance. Even throughout the history of humanity and civilisation, such manifestations have clearly played an essential role in attaining divinity in many cultures. Geometry, for instance, is derived from the shape of nature, which behaves in a certain way to show the similarity between macrocosm and microcosm in the universe. For example, the geometry of a seashell on a beach is similar to the movement of the stars in a galaxy. It all behaves in a sacred pattern, which serves to balance the cosmos to some degree. These are sacred geometrical forms that maintain the true meaning of the universe's existence.

3.13.1 Mudi (headgear) of mother goddesses in Theyyam

Rather than any other embellishment, the Theyyam *mudi* (headgear) of the mother goddesses dominates all others due to its sheer size and auspiciousness. *Mudi* (headgear) of Theyyam is primarily constructed from organic material available abundantly in northern Kerala. The *mudi's* (headgear) armature is composed of bamboo and areca stem splices that are tightly tied with organic fibre thread in unique patterns to attain the structure. The fibre threads are made from *murukkumaram* stem (Koli tree stems); after gathering the *murukkumaram* (Koli tree stem), the bark is removed, and the remaining section is processed into fibre and dried in the sun. These dry fibres are soaked in water before being used to bind the armature. After tying, the knots at the

joint grew extremely strong when the water dried. This tying procedure is used in both larger and smaller *mudi* (headgear) to make them stronger and more durable. *Mudi's* (headgear) armature assembles into desirable forms, which are often round, triangular, and square.

3.13.2 Circular shape in mudi (headgear)

Some of Bhagavathy's *mudi* (headgear) is mainly made out of the circular form. With many circles and semi-circles.

3.13.2.1 *Vatta mudi* (Circular Headgear)

The *vatta mudi* (circular headgear) encompasses the vast majority of the furious mother goddesses' conceptions, resulting in the most prominent *mudi* (headgear). categorization. As the name indicates, it represents a circular shape. The front portion of this *mudi* (headgear) will be slightly projected outward and stylized with several bronze ornamentations: *chethi poov* (jungle geranium, also referred to as Ixora coccinea), *mallika poov* (jasmine, additionally known as Jasminum multiflorum), and wooden embellishments decorated with lead and other metal foils. *vattapathi, paarvalu,* and *narukku parvalu*, crafted from tender palm leaves, flowers, and peacock feathers, are also utilised. Mother goddesses appear in more than fifty variations, including Narambil Bhagavathy, Puthiya Bhagavathy, Kanakkara Bhagavathy, and Angakkara Bhagavathy. All of these divine goddesses' wear *vatta mudi* (circular headgear).

As a circular *mudi* (headgear), it conveys the same meaning as the former. This genre of Theyyam *mudi* (headgear) is quite similar to Muchilottu Bhagavathy, with the exception of various symbolic embellishments that are unrelated to cosmic symbolism. Circles represent the notion that there is neither a beginning nor an end. It also indicates the vicinity of radiation from a single source. In abstract terms, the circular mudi can be described as radiation from Bhagavathy's core or head.

3.13.2.2 *Purthattu mudi*

It is another *mudi* that is commonly used in Chamundi Theyyams such as Raktha Chamundi, Madayil Chamundi, Aryakkara Chamundi, and Neelankai Chamundi. The *mudi* (headgear) is likewise circular in shape, but its positioning and construction vary from those of the previous varieties. *Purathattu Mudi*, as the name implies, is the *mudi* positioned behind the back of Theyyam, with an armature attached to the performer's abdomen. The armature of such a kind of *mudi* (headgear) is made entirely of three sticks called *chavari. vallu* is a term given to the tender coconut fronds' ranchis, which have been constructed into a circular shape with a thickness of approximately one finger. On top, *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) are trimmed and sewn to make it flat. To decorate this, a peacock feather and a symbolic pattern are used. In the symbolic image adorning it, the dominant one is the crescent. Some of the crescents are drawn to *mudi* (headgear) in white, but others are made out of metal as a silver embellishment (See Figure 3.12 given below).

Figure 3.12: Madayil Chamundi with all the embellishments during performance. [47]

The crescent symbolism has several symbolic connotations, the most notable among which is the fact that it directly depicts Shiva's half-moon symbols. But, in the present scenario, if it is a crescent based on the Shaivite notion, why is it composed of more than just one piece? Why are round circles employed equally outside and inside the crescent? In Tantric art, the crescent symbol symbolises water, or in a tantric sense, the crescent symbol is known as the *apas* (See Figure 3.13 given below, which shows five tattwas).

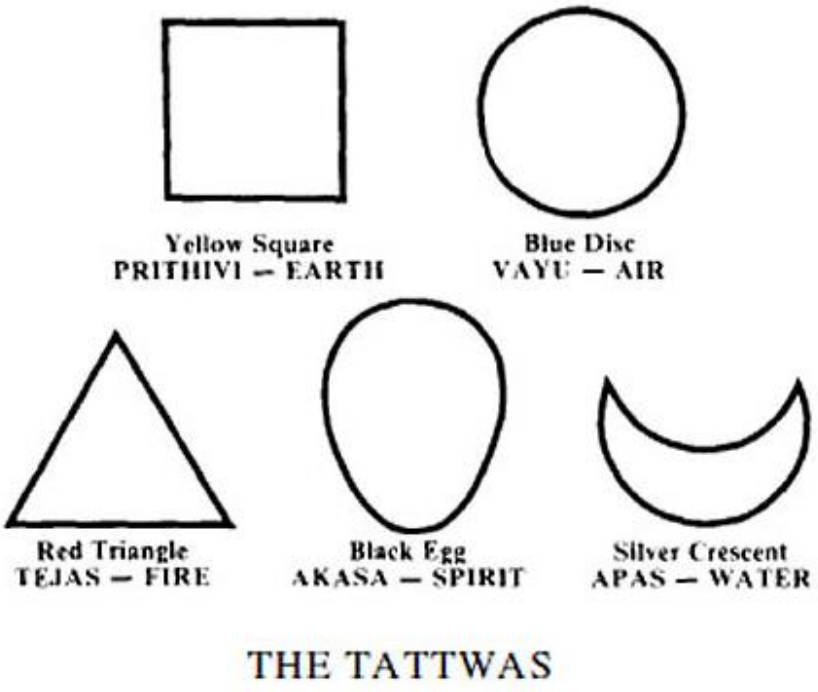

Figure 3.13: The five tattwas.

Thus, it could possibly be considered an embodiment of Mudi's flowing water.

[47] http://travelkannur.com/theyyam-kerala/madayil-chamundi-theyyam/, Accessed 23 Feb. 2021.

3.13.3 Triangular shape in *mudi* (headgear)

3.13.3.1 *Valiya mudi* (huge headgear)

The Theyyams, components of the Thai Paradevatha concept, represent the fierce Shakti of Goddess Kali in multiple avatars, which include Ashtamichal Bhagavathy, Pullakkal Bhagavathy, Porkkali Bhagavathy, Mulavannur Bhagavathy, and Padarkulangara Bhagavathy, who are wearing the *valiya mudi* (huge headgear), an enormous headgear. The Theyyam performer and specialist Lakshmanan claims that, "these *mudi* (headgear) progress to a height of fifty to sixty feet and are composed of areca palm stems and bamboo splices. The attaching component on the performer's head is referred to as the *kooda* (similar to the Malayalam word basket). *mudi* (headgear) is supported on the head of the performer by long bamboos carried by several individuals from the crowd to keep it balanced from all sides."[48] These *mudi* (headgear), with their sheer enormity, rule the whole Theyyam pantheon of deities (See Figure 3.14 given below).

[48] Lakshmanan, personal interview, June 9th, 2019, Kannur.

Figure 3.14: preparation of *valiya mudi* of Kalariyaal Bhagavathy.

The tip of one of them reaches towards the sky like a temple shikara, with a perfect breadth of three fingers at the apex. The *mudi* (headgear) is mostly covered with a pattern of tripartite colour symbolism in red, white, and black, with triangular lines ascending to the peak. Similar to the temple shikhara structure, this could possibly be viewed as an energy flow structure from the performer to the cosmos and back (See Figure 3.15 given below).

Kalariyaal Bhagavathy mudi

Pazhassi Bhagavathy mudi

Figure 3.15: *Valiya mudi* of Kalariyaal Bhagavathy and Pazhassi Bhagavathy.

The shape of the *mudi* (headgear) readily resembles a triangle, which is another important symbol of the tantric beliefs, also known as the *trikona* (triangle). A triangle is a sacred enclosure of tripartite lines because three is the least number of lines that can compose an enclosure. In another sense, a triangle is regarded as the first closed shape generated since the universe's genesis. So, it has a fundamental shape that has crystallised with the whole manifestation of creation. Tantric artwork demonstrates variations in the use of inverted and rising triangles. The inverted type represents the female principle Shakthi or *prakriti* (nature itself), whereas the upward type represents the male principle Shiva or *purush,* or ultimate meditation (See Figure 3.16 given below).

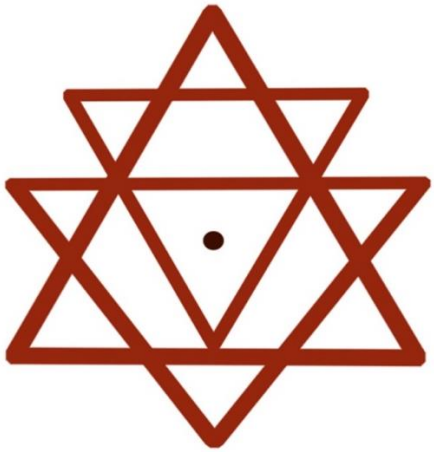

Figure 3.16: Tantric device representing Shiva Shakthi emergence.

A triangle's structural tripartite character may be expressed on many levels, including the three-fold inclinations of positive, neutral, and negative, as well as the three Gunas (virtue/merit) Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas, and creation, preservation, and destruction. In Tantric sects, the triangle is the symbol of fire.

The use of triangles with the tripartite colours of red, white, and black is clearly visible in these Theyyam forms, which visually represent the various shades of a glowing fire. According to the ancient Chandogya Upanishad, these three colours signify three deities: red as fire, white as water, and black as earth, all created by the pure divinity Sat.

"Pure being made each of the three deities, or elements. The principle ingredient, and joined with it the other two as secondary ingredients. The process is as follows: it took half of the original fire and added to it one fourth of water and one fourth of earth, and thus created gross fire. Likewise, it added to half of the original earth, one fourth each of fire and water, and created gross

earth. Thus fire, water, and earth came to acquire their separate names and serve special purposes among men"[49]

These three deities became each of them, and they manifested themselves in the phenomenon as follows:

"The red color of (gross) fire is the color of (the original fire); the white color of (gross) fire is the color of (the original water) the black color of (gross) fire is the color of (the original earth). Thus, vanishes from fire what is commonly called fire, the modification being only a name, arising from speech, while the three colors (forms alone are true".[50]

"*Thus, vanishes Etc.: The three colors, or forms, constitute the visible fire. When these three colors are explained as belonging to the original fire, water, and earth, fire as it is commonly known disappears, and also the word fire. For fire has no existence apart from a word and the idea denoted by that word. Therefore, what the ignorant designate by the word fire is false, the only truth being the three colors*".[51]

Thus, the inference suggests that the three deities, fire, water, and earth, each with their own red, white, and black colours, create visible fire. Similarly, in the case of these Theyyam *mudi* (headgear), the triangular shape and tripartite colour generate a glowing symbol of fire. The Thai Paradevata narration contains prominent allusions to fire, which are shown throughout *mudi's* (headgear) tripartite-coloured triangular shape symbolism.

[49] Sankaracarya, et al*The Upanishad Taittiriya and Chhandogya*. Translated by Nikhilananda, 1st ed., Harper & Brothers Publishers, New York, 2016.volume IV. p-228

[50] Iibid. p-229

[51] Iibid

According to folklore, Thai Paradevatha was born while Sathi self-immolated in the fire pit of *yaga* (ritualistic veneration of gods) after being humiliated by her father for attending the ritual without an invitation. Thai Paradevatha, produced in Badrakali form from Shiva's hair, burns down the *yaga* (ritualistic veneration of gods) and slashes Dakshan's (Sathi's) head.

3.14 Colour Symbolism in Theyyam Mother Goddesses

Even though the immediate inspection leads the spectator to assume that red is the only prominent colour in Theyyam, this is not the case. A thorough inspection of Theyyam's material culture reveals that there are five colours in addition to red, and they all maintain symbolic significance and impart histories of meaning. Even in more in-depth study examinations, it is clear that the material compound employed for colour extraction also carries a distinct symbolic meaning and historical value. For example, the colour of yellow in the ornamentation differs from the yellow turmeric written on the body. This is because turmeric's tangible identity is conceptually separate from others. As a result, each hue must be individually examined in isolation.

So, before we go into the other four colours, let's start with the significance of red. Although red is commonly used in Theyyam, the significance of red in the conceptions of mother deities is distinct from that of other forms.

The entire structure of Theyyam appears to be infused with the colour red. So, it is essential to initially investigate its significance and, more specifically, what it symbolises. According to the Theyyam specialists, while the colour and symbolism of Theyyam are associated with stories and traditions to a certain extent, they also rely on deeply ingrained cultural norms and surroundings that have been shaped by cultural dissemination. Thus, it will be possible to study the relationship between the colour of the Theyyam and the cultural aspect, as well as the myths and legends, in order to identify the significance of colour and symbolism. Because each Theyyam developed in such different ways, the myth and folklore are not enough to explain the

relationship. Furthermore, actual narratives are frequently supplanted with sattvic cultic myths and, less frequently, Vaishnavites ideas, which provide only a superficial understanding of them.

Evidence indicates that the name *Kaliyattam* is a synonym for the name Theyyattam due to influences from the Kali worship (mother goddesses) of the native peoples of north Kerala. However, a paradox develops when the representation of Kali worship contrasts with the Theyyam form. Kali is always black, although Theyyams are not. The name Kali indicates an interpretation of the colour black. Kali's name could be additionally interpreted as a metaphor for the black night in Malayalam. Not only in Kerala but also in other regions of India, Kali is represented in black. The widely believed idea in India, 'Ma Kali worship' also known as Kali pooja, is a prominent example of this; she is shown as either black or blue. Although all of these examples show that the Kali is black in colour, but why is the Theyyattam of Mother Goddess Reverence, also known as *Kaliyattam* (kali's dance), so richly decked with red?

The prominent red colour appears in various areas of the mother goddesses' Theyyam categories, such as *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), *mekhezhuthu* (body drawing), *mudi* (head gear), breast plate, and costumes. Because every legend of these mother goddesses features a representation of death, a straightforward reading may conclude that the colour red is analogous to blood. Each narrative involves the spilling of blood in a variety of scenarios, especially by slaughter, suicide, or victimisation. In other words, the red symbolism could potentially be seen as a representation of the deity's spirit, invoking its devastated past in the performer's body. But as a ritual symbol, it also carries some other hidden meaning. Although the overall composition of the Theyyam is adorned with red, as part of an in-depth study, it is important to study each part of the form in isolation.

Mukathezhuthu (face drawing), the fundamental component of Theyyam that has remained intact since its inception, is more important than any other embellishment in the Theyyam pantheon. The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing),

has not only the literal meaning of the colour employed but also a rich history of materials and minerals with broader cultural significance. So, before addressing the significance of the colour red as a tone, it is necessary to consider the colour red in *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), as a substance.

3.14.1 More than the colour red, pigment materials of mukathezhuthu

3.14.1.1 *Chayilyam* (vermillion pigment)

Since ancient times, the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), of Theyyam has been made possible through the minerals known as *chayillyam* and *manayola*. These two mineral combinations are used for creating grades of reds and oranges appropriate for the Theyyam. *Chayillyam* (vermillion pigment), a red pigment derived from the mineral cinnabar, is chemically composed of HgS. For thousands of years, numerous cultures throughout the world have favoured it as a painting medium owing to its adhesive qualities and intense, brilliant red colour. Cinnabar's qualities, such as its high density and low hardness, make it the best possible substance for painting surfaces. Because of its durability against oxidation and acid rain, there are several fragments of evidence regarding the history and use of cinnabar throughout the world. The Jaina scripture Chitrakalpadruma, written approximately 530 BC, has evidence of cinnabar usage in India. The literature elaborates on the cinnabar cleaning technique, which involves smashing raw material, water, sugar, and lime using a mortar until a yellow substrate develops. After drying the substrate, the procedure can be repeated up to fifteen times. In the final repeat, lime juice is added to the crushed paste, which is then dried into tablets. The mention of the cleaning process of cinnabar can also be seen in the ancient text Silparatna from Sri Lanka.[52] In Turkey, inorganic materials are grinded to increase the

[52] T. A, Gopinath Rao. *Painting in Ancient India, Modern Review*, vol. 14, 1918., Renate, Nöller. "Cinnabar reviewed: characterization of the red pigment and its reactions." *Studies in Conservation*, vol. 60, no. 2, 2014, pp. 79-87.

persistence of vermillion, and cinnabar vermillion can be seen in every wall colour.

Cinnabar has been employed in Chinese medicine as well as Indian Ayurvedic medicine for over 2,000 years. From the beginning, the alchemical recombining of pure mercury with pure sulphur to distil the finest form of cinnabar required a variety of occult and rituals from civilisations ranging from Europe to Asia. “Whatever their culture demonstrates, the act of artificially producing Cinnabar demands sublimation. Mercury is synonymous with Shiva in Ayurvedic tradition, whereas sulphur corresponds with Kali, the male and female aspects of Hindu philosophy. Thus, the inorganic synthesis of vermillion using mercury and sulphur is believed to represent Shiva and Kali's sexual union.”[53]

“In the Middle Ages, Sanskrit literature on ayurvedic practice known as Rasarnavalkalpa explains mercury as rasa.”[54]

The literature primarily emphasises Rasayana and Rasavidya, which are methods of employing mercury and the study of mercury, respectively. It explains objectives such as the transmutation of base metal into an impeccable form of metal. Here, the text implies that perfecting metal is equivalent to perfecting a person. “Rasarnavakalpa designates mercury as *dhathurupi*, meaning metallic in nature. It is also known by several other names, such as *linga, rasa, lokesa, narajiva, rasadhatu, rasaraja, parade, suthaka,* and *suta*. This explains mercury as a principle essence that came into existence through

[53] Anita, Chowdry. "More Than the Colour Red: the Unspoken Symbolism of Cinnabar Pigment in Indian Painting." *Academia.edu - Share Research*, University of Cambridge, 17 Mar. 2014, www.academia.edu/6544807/More_than_the_Colour_Red_the_unspoken_symbolism_of_cinnabar_pigment_in_Indian_painting. Accessed 21 Dec. 2020.

[54] Rasa the Sanskrit word which have several dimensions of meaning in many context and implementation. In essence it is consider to be juice, sap of plant, essential fluid, waterbody, blood, creative essence, molten metal,

the divine male principle."[55] on the other hand the Sulphur to the divine female principle.

Tantra is a spiritual system that focusses on elevating the consciousness of an individual to a higher level of awareness, known as the universal dimensions. It is also associated with the development of extrasensory perception and the acquisition of supernatural talents known as siddhis. Tantric art in the tantra religion progressed from anthropomorphic gods and goddesses to a more fundamental, delicate art based on pure symbolism and abstraction. The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), of a Theyyam appeared to take shape in these philosophical concepts as it evolved into a pure abstraction and symbolic notion. More crucially, each Theyyam's face drawing is drawn in a distinctive abstraction of symbolism and colour coding with the objective of obtaining the deity's supernatural abilities or achieving an enhanced state of consciousness.

The creative union shiva and shakti, or fundamental principle in the creation of the universe, is depicted in Tantric art as interwoven triangles with a *bindu* (dot or the origine) in the centre of them. The triangle symbolises the generative powers *lingam* (phallic symbolism of the male principle) and *yoni* (vulvic symbolism of the female principle), respectively; on the other hand, *bindu* (dot or the origine) represents the opposite of infinite, which is zero in the cosmos. The overall image is a *yantra* (device), which is symbolically capable of generative powers. The material used for drawing these *yantras* is the vermillion, or the red Mercuric sulphide; it is the same alchemical metaphor for the union of Shiva and Shakti.

It is no longer debatable that *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), which is visually complementary to tantric art, and the use of the *chayillyam* (cinnabar), a colour representing a metaphor of Shiva and Shakti's creative union, are both appropriate. In another sense, the material quality, visual characteristics, and

[55] Mira, Roy, and B.V Subbarayappa, editors. *Rasarnavakalpa*. archive.org, Indian National Science Academy, New Delhi, 1976,p.4

philosophy around it all combine to form a sensory expression, or *rasa*, which is the metaphorical fluid of emotional minds.

3.14.1.2 *Manayola* (Orpiment)

Manayola (orpiment) is another significant mineral used in preparing Theyyam's *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing). The pigment generates a dark orange colour with a bright tone; the mineral holds more sulphur and arsenic, thus its chemical name, arsenic sulphide. A well-powdered orpiment is mixed with oil and applied to the performer's face to create a strong yellowish orange colour. Kathakali additionally employs orpiment for face writing. Around the globe in various time periods, usage of Orpiment can be noted in various contexts.

The use of orpiment mineral in painting dates back to the New Kingdom era in Egypt and continues into the Roman period.[56] Orpiment is also identified in the wall paintings of a 14th-century church in Ethiopia named Yemrehanna Krestos.[57] There have been multiple archaeological finds demonstrating that Orpiment was widely used across Asia. The most notable discovery is the widespread usage of Orpiment in illuminated manuscripts from the sixth to twelfth centuries AD from various areas of Central Asia along silk routes, as well as the discovery of a fifth-century AD lacquer screen that was widely used as yellow paint.[58]

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[56] S, Colinart. "Analysis of Inorganic Yellow Colour in Ancient Egyptian Painting." *Colour and Painting in Ancient Egypt*, edited by W.V Davies, The British Museum Press: London,UK, 2001, pp. 1-4., Ruth, Siddall. "Mineral Pigments in Archaeology: Their Analysis and the Range of Available Materials." *Minerals*, vol. 8, no. 5, 2018, p. 21.

[57] Kidane F, Gebremariam., et al. "Application of a portable XRF analyzer to investigate the medieval wall paintings of Yemrehanna Krestos Church, Ethiopia." X-Ray Spectrometry, vol. 42, no. 6, 2013, pp. 462-469., also see at Kidane F Gebremariam., et al. "Application of a Portable XRF Analyzer to Investigate the Medieval Wall Paintings of Yemrehanna Krestos Church, Ethiopia." *Wiley Online Library*, 9 July 2013, onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/xrs.2504. Accessed 31 Dec. 2020.

[58] Renate, Nöller, and Oliver Hahn. "Illuminated Manuscripts from Turfan Tracing Silk Road Glamour by Analyzing Pigments." STAR: Science & Technology of Archaeological Research, vol. 1, no. 2, 2015, pp.

Although the use of *manayola* (orpiment) in *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Theyyam may be entirely independent of these outcomes, all of these applications of the mineral occur all throughout an analogous or identical historical period of Theyyam around the world. It contributes to data reliability and can be helpful in the study of intracultural expansion, which may have occurred in ancient times. For example, in Theyyam, green pigment is produced by blending *manayola* (orpiment) with *neelam* (indigo) to produce "Vergant." “It’s preparation and application in faraway civilisations additionally established it as a pigment in artworks and other esoteric applications. The main examples are the early mediaeval Anglo-Saxon and Lindisfarne gospel manuscripts.”[59]

3.14.1.3 *Chenchilyam*

“The medicinal tree *maruthu* (Shorea robusta) is the source of the natural resinous juice known as *chenchilyam*, which translates as "befriending the fire" in Sanskrit.”[60] As the name indicates, it has been endorsed as an efficient burn prevention remedy; thus, it acts as fire insulation at the time of performance. It acts as an adhesive when combining *chayilyam* and *manayola*, and it also imparts shine to colours. People in some parts of north Kerala, particularly Kasaragod, would encircle the *maruthu* tree to treat burns caused by the *cheral* tree's gum.

3.14.2 Red color in Theyyam material culture

Without regard for material importance, the symbolic meaning of the colour red of Theyyam encompasses the other decorations of Theyyam, such as headgear, garments, breastplates, and other embellishments. Each of these cases demonstrates that the colour red has a specific cultural meaning and function to cover. The Theyyams have a deep connection to the earth, land, and

[59] Mark, Clarke. *“Anglo-Saxon Manuscript Pigments.” Studies in Conservation*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2004, pp. 231–244. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25487700. Accessed 1 Jan. 2021.

[60] "Monier-Williams Sanskrit Dictionary 1899 Advanced." IITS Koeln, www.sanskrit-lexicon.uni-koeln.de/scans/MWScan/2020/web/webtc2/index.php.

environment, which is apparent first and foremost in colour. Bright red, yellow, saffron, green, black, and white are prevalent natural colours in these locations. Despite this, the use of natural ingredients allows the Theyyam to dominate with natural, vibrant colours.

Indeed, the performance of Theyyam in the native landscape, characterised by the dark sap colour of green woods, resembles a gleaming *chethi* poov (Ixora coccinea) set against a verdant leaf backdrop. This same flower adorns Theyyam, contributing to its red hue. Thus, when referring to colour symbolism without regard for material quality, the predominant red obtains multiple degrees of significance. For instance, it is an expressive entity that hypnotises both the audience and the artist; additionally, it is a cultural identity that establishes an ethical notion. The reason could be that the colour holds a historical meaning that has been profoundly established in people's psyches and practices from ancient times. So, before delving into the colour symbolism of Theyyam, it may be beneficial to examine the concept of colour in a broader context.

According to historical records, the colour symbolism employed in Theyyam has remained unaltered since the time of Velan Veriyattam performances of the Sangam era. During those time periods, performers wear white garments bordered with crimson hues called '*kani*', along with a red fabric called *'sivappu'* on top. The performer also wears a safeguarding band adorned with a red string of flowers.

Murukan's chosen consort Valli used to wear red dresses almost exclusively; her fondness towards red can be seen in various instances, and it is stated that Murukan influences her desire for red. When she ultimately embraced Kerala's Bhagavathy cult, the colour retained her identity.[61] Even though Valli was Murukan's second wife, many historians believe that their relationship was Tamil Saivite equivalent to the well-known Krishna and Radha

[61] K. K. N, Kurup. *The Cult of Teyyam and Hero Worship in Kerala*. Indian Publications, 1973.pp-29.

romance in Vaishnavite literature.[62] Valli is often portrayed in art wearing red outfits. Even in contemporary Murukan and Valli posters, she is seen wearing red sarees or various colours of red.[63] So, depending on the inferences, it is possible that the red colour symbolism of mother deities in Theyyam has been influenced by the Sangam period Velan cult and the Murukan-Valli romance in Tamil literature.

During the Sangam period, it was usual to place stones to honour chaste women's entities, which are known as *masati* stones. It has been stated that elaborate rituals known as *tunankai* were performed by both males and females around these shrines at that time.[64]

According to K. K. N. Kurup "The practice of placing stones in commemoration of such women's personalities has been substituted by elevating them to the rank of goddesses and presenting them as Theyyams."[65] The female members' loyalty is prevalent in all of these ceremonies and performances, and it is symbolised and emphasised by the use of red. Similar to this concept, the red colour symbolism existed and continues to exist on a far larger scale throughout the Indian mainland. One of the best examples of it is the usage of red in pan-Indian marriages, when the brides are adorned in red sindhur and the men wear a red scarf around their heads.

Travellers in mediaeval India have seen the intricate use of red hue symbolism in India's main land since ancient times. Pietro Della Valle, a 16th-

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[62] K. V, Zvelebil. "The Valli-Murugan myth — Its development." *Indo-Iranian Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1980, pp. 113-135. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24653319. Accessed 6 Jan. 2021.

[63] K. V, Zvelebil. "The Valli-Murugan myth — Its development." *Indo-Iranian Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1980, pp. 113-135. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/24653319. Accessed 6 Jan. 2021.

[64] Porul.pp 60,. K. K. N, Kurup. *The Cult of Teyyam and Hero Worship in Kerala.* Indian Publications, 1973. Pp 63

[65] Ibid.

century Italian musicologist and explorer, recalls his travels in Indian main land in letter no. VIII.

> *"on an other side of the city, but out of the circuit of the houses, an open place, is seen a great and fair Tree, of that kind which I saw in the sea coasts of Persia, near Ormuz, called there Lul but here Ber.*[66]*The Gentiles of the country hold it in great veneration for its greatness and age, riting*[67] *and honoring it often with their superstitious ceremonies, as dear and dedicated to a Goddess of theirs call'd Parvete,*[68] *whom they hold to be the Wife of Mahadeu, one of their greatest Deities. On the trunk of this tree a little above the ground, they have rudely engraven round circle, which really hath not any feature of a humane countenance, but according to their gross application represents that of their idol. This face they keep painted with a bright Flesh-colour, and this by a sacred rite of religion; as the romans also dy'd the face of Jupiter with Vermillion, as Pliny testifies."*[69]

According to the account, the sacred tree to Parvathi is decorated in various colours of crimson, which he ties with Pliny's testimony on the Roman tradition of colouring Jupiter's face with vermillion. These are from the mediaeval period. During that time, vibrant colours invaded the Indian suburbs. In one notable example, the letter details the decoration of religious structures with red paint.

> *"The Ceiling, Pillars, and Walls of this Temple were adorn'd with Painting, especially red, which how dear'tis to the Indians I formerly intimated. The doors of their Houses, namely the Posts, Architraves, and Barrs that fasten it, are all colour'd so; adding some mixture of white limes to the red; for of white too they are so enamour'd that all Men are*

[66] "Bar" is also known as Banyan tree (Ficus benghalensis)
[67] Riting is referring to performing rite
[68] "Parvete" is Parvati the consort of Siva
[69] Valle, Pietro D., and Edward Grey. The Travels of Pietro Della Valle in India: From the Old English Translation of 1664. 1892. Pp. 35-36.

> *generally clothed with it; a custom peradventure deriv'd to them from Egypt where it was in use, as Herodotus writes"*[70]

In this section of the letter, the author discovers parallels with Egyptian culture, which he believes may have been influenced by Egyptians through trading routes. However, Indians, like Egyptians, place a higher value on a metaphysical level of colour perception.

[70] Ibid, pp, 74

Chapter IV

Colour and Symbolism of Heroes and Ancestor deity Worship

Hero worship is a significant aspect of culture and nation, celebrating heroes who have demonstrated exceptional courage, intellect, and nobility, contributing to the betterment of society. In Greece, hero worship is a personification of nature's drama, with the local spirit of gods and individual hero worship being celebrated during seasonal festivals. Greeks view heroes as unique personalities with exceptional quality of life who lived and perished as mortals but were later bestowed immortality by the people due to their charisma, courage, and power.

In the Roman Empire, heroes were selected through public authority elections, and worship was a civic duty for emperors. Hero worship was deeply influenced by the empire, and the formation of political government structures and familial institutions heavily relied on hero worship. The hero's perspective of ideas and accomplishments was preserved in the tradition through literature and rituals, and the legacies of these heroes prospered for their contemporaries. Thus, heroes are considered normal men deified to the status near to God himself.

Every community or distinct social group in the world possesses its own heroes, who serve as champions of the community's ideals, upheld by the original ideal figure. He is often referred to as the ancestral hero, the first hero, or the original one. These ancestor heroes are considered the protective deity of the community. They are the founders of the family, community, or group.

After the death of heroic ancestors, they transform into deity forms and maintain the order of social relations in the community by protecting their kin. According to renowned anthropologist Eduard Burnett Taylor, “the worship of ancestors is one of the great branches of the religion of mankind. Its principles are not difficult to understand, for they plainly keep up the social relations of the world. The dead ancestors, now passed into deity, simply go on protecting his own family and receiving suit and service from them as of old; the dead chief still watches over his own tribes, still holds his authority by helping friends and harming enemies, still rewards the right and sharply punishes the wrong.”[71] In a sense, it can be said that the lives of the heroes and ancestors’ contribution to society made the dynamic progress of the history of the world.

4.1 Ancient Heroic ancestral tradition in India

Numerous sites across India's ancient past attest to the practice of hero worship.

In recognition of their ancestor chieftain's valiant actions, the Bhil tribe constr ucted a temple. The Nilgiris Shepheard group builds cottages in commemoration of their deceased ancestor. Gonds celebrate their heroic ancestor by constructing a memorial stone, which they believe will protect them from evil spirits. In the Mariya tribe of central India, the ancestral hero's relatives, primarily co-sons-in-law, create a monument stone and perform the last rites. On rare ceremonial occasions, the memorial stone was reinstalled accompanied by drumbeats and musical instruments. They nourished him in the way he chose to live his life with the aim to improve his spiritual health. Aside from the memorial stone, visitors frequently leave wealth, jewels, and food as offerings.

The hero worship practice is well documented in south Indian literature, particularly during the Sangam period. These worships are extremely close to the pattern of central India, which was previously discussed. The hero-

[71] Edward B, Tylor. *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom*. 1871.p. 113

worshipping tradition is explicitly referenced in literary works such as Malaipatukatan and Pattinappalai. Heroes who died in battle are commemorated in the stones for their tremendous accomplishments and courage. People revere these stones and believe them very near God. Tunankai, the dance performance that takes place during this time period, includes poems glorifying these warriors. Mankutikizhar, the famous poet of the Sangam period, paid homage to these warriors with his poems.

In north Kerala, the hero-worshipping tradition is primarily perpetuated through songs and poetry. Certain parts of the area possess evidence of hero stone worship, with the Kaliyampalli village hero stone serving as the most notable example. North Kerala's folklore, art, rituals, and literature reflect the Sangam period's hero-worshipping tradition. During the Sangam period, Kuravar villages used to commemorate martyred heroes with songs and the native drum beat Marasu around the hero stone. Their female folk used to do Vallikoothu by singing Valaipattu. The Vallikoothu, also known as Kuravaikoothu, is a performance in which ladies resemble Valli (God Murukan's wife) in their makeup. This performance's imaginative scheme, which incorporates music, singing, makeover, and dance to commemorate the departed hero, is outstanding. The legacy of this performance can still be witnessed in north Kerala's Theyyam performances. So, it is not unnecessary to state that the Theyyam hero-ancestor worshipping tradition has been greatly impacted by south Indian hero worship and hero stone cults.

The dance of Velan Veriyaattu from the Sangam era, which contributed significantly to the establishment of Theyyam, constitutes a hero-worshipping tradition. It is conducted to appease Murukan and fend off the evil spirit from young females. The performer wields a spear and dances, prophesying the girl's future happiness at the conclusion. This propitiation includes many rites and material culture, which are still perpetuated in Theyyam performances. The most notable of them is the usage of red *chethi poov* (jungle geranium) and *arali poov* (oleander flower) on the top of Velan's *kalam* (pot); this is the most prevalent flower used in Theyyam today.

4.2 Ancient Heroic ancestral tradition in Theyyam

In terms of the Theyyam hero worshipping tradition, one famous classic example is the Kativanur Veeran Theyyam in north Kerala. It is revered not just in northern Kerala but also in areas of Kodagu district, Karnataka.

4.2.1 Kativanur Veeran

Kativanur is considered one of the most important hero deities in the Theyyam pantheon. The couple Kumarappan and Chakki gave birth to Kativanur in the Mangat village of Kannur. Mandappan was the couple's only son, and they pampered him with affection. Mandappan had great Kalari (martial practice) lessons since childhood and grew up becoming a warrior. However, all of this training does not prepare him to undertake any meaningful profession to earn a living or provide for a family when he reaches adulthood; instead, he enjoys wandering around with his companions and hunting with his bow and arrows as a leisure time. Mandappan's nature worried his parents, who began bickering with him about his obligations.

When the father's counsel to modify his lifestyle and methods failed, the mother decided to deal with the situation by not providing food for their child in the future. However, when his father Kumaarappan discovered that his child had been hiding and eating food at home, he began scolding him and accusing his mother of feeding it. At the height of the scolding, Kumaarappan destroys Mandappan's bow and arrow and throws them into a nearby well. Mandappan, distraught, departed the house with his remaining weaponry. On the way, he met several of his friends who were heading for Coorg and decided to accompany them. However, after hearing of Mandappan's parents' dislike, his friends declined to join them for the journey. So, to avoid Mandappan, they fed him a lot of toddy and meat and had him sleep in between journeys. His companions abandoned him after he fell asleep for several hours. Mandappan awakens from his extended sleep and finds out that all of his friends abandoned him; he falls

into despair. Despite his despondency, Mandappan continued on his trek to Coorg, beginning alone.

When he arrived in Coorg, he proceeded to his uncle's home at Kativanur to stay. Mandappan's uncle and aunty liked him and treated him as if he were their own child. He maintained his martial practice and gained new talents. Mandappan's conduct pleases his uncle and aunt, so they give him half of their property. With that, he launched an oil-crushing business, which thrived. One day, while on his way to deliver his oil to the client, he became thirsty and went to a local well in Vellarkot. There he came across a woman named Chemmarathi, who offered him water. They fell in love with each other. Mandappan married her with his uncle and aunt's blessings.

They were a happily married pair till Chemmarathi discovered her husband's lethargy in undertaking any type of employment. Above all, she began to distrust Mandappan's loyalty to her due to his prolonged absence from work and home. Chemmarathi questioned him, but he assured her that he had never been unfaithful to her. So, as Mandappan and Chemmarathi's lives were gradually improving with ups and downs, a critical turning point came in their lives. Mandappan was once plucking a hair from his home-cooked supper when he heard a voice outside calling out for combat. A troop of Kudag bandits from Mutharmuti has invaded their village. Mandappan does not hesitate to act after hearing this; he believes it is inappropriate for a warrior to sit and eat while the call to battle is heard. Despite his laziness, Mandappan is a man of ethics in battle. When he rushes out of the room, his head hits the doorframe and starts bleeding. Seeing this, Chemmarathi pleaded not to join in wars, alleging that if he sees blood before going to combat, he will definitely die.

"*Aarum murinju arupathaaru ghatam aakum. Noorum murinju Nootiyettu thundamaakum. Kanda kaithamelum mundamelum meni vaariyeriyum Kodagan."*

She says that the Kudagars' savage onslaught will undoubtedly cause your body to be killed and severed. Hearing this, Mandappan simply smiles and

leaves his residence. On his approach to the combat, he encounters his uncle's son and tells him that if he dies, all the banana bunches in the nearby plantation would fall. After saying this, he left to fight. He resisted the conflict with all of his weapons and eventually vanquished them. The word travelled quickly; everyone congratulated him and wished him well; his uncle and aunty, as well as their kid, were overjoyed.

But Chemmarathi felt awful about herself for saying negative remarks before he left for combat; at the same time, she is happy that he has returned as a hero. But his happiness did not last long; when he returned home, the surviving bandit Kudagars attacked him and sliced him in pieces with daggers. When Chemmarathi heard the terrible news, she fell into grief and said that her words had become a curse on Mandappan. Unexpectedly, the words Mandappan told his cousin also came to be true. The banana bunches from the plantain tree suddenly fell off the plantation. Devastated Chemmarathi jumped into the pyre of flames at his burial, taking her own life. From then on, the cousins and uncle began to witness marvels. In between post-cremation baths, they witness Mandappan and Chemmarathi's souls swimming in the same river. Mandappan's spirit asked his cousin to construct a permanent Stanam for him so that he might be worshipped by his followers. Later, when some of the followers returned to the Mandappan birthplace, Mangat in Kannur, they brought his heroic stories and spirit along with them.

Mandappan, the defied hero, is today revered in Kannur's temple and is known as Kativanur Veeran, or the Hero of Kativanur. Almost every community in Kannur worships Kativanur Veeran. The deified Theyyam of Kativanur Veeran is mostly performed at family shrines. The Thiyya communities of Payyanur and Kunhimangalam keep shrines that are well-known for their celebrations. They wish Kativanur Veeran success in his lawsuits against the offenders and criminals. In addition to Kativanur, Coorg, shrines dedicated to the god can be found at Kambati, Pothil, and Allikkimatam.

Many other hero deities have borrowed Kativanoor Veeran Theyyam's makeover approach. The head gear of the Theyyam is an iconic example of *pooketti mudi*. The *mudi* is a majestic work of art that sculpts out the *murukkumaram* (Indian Coral Tree) with greater precision and auspiciousness. The tree is cut during a certain auspicious season, the month of *Kumbham* in the Indian solar calendar. According to the Theyyam specialist and performer Vinu Peruvannan "The *mudi* of Kativanoor Veeran is comprised of up to four separate pieces of forms or components. First, the *chekki poov* is attached to the *chenni pathi*. Then *chenni pathi* and *puram kaani* are both connected to *pookatti*. The process of fastening the mudi, known as *pooketti theerkuka*, literally translates to "flower tying," and as a result, each portion of the mudi symbolizes a flower. The other portions, such as *makudam, cheyyakku, chennippathi, purampali,* and *puramkaani*, are also tied to the main *mudi* complex."[72] Figure 4.1 illustrates Kativanoor Veeran Theyyam.

[72] Vinu Peruvannan, personal interview, November 21st, 2019, Kannur.

Figure 4.1: Kativanoor Veeran Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

Kativanur Veeran's *mukathezhuthu* is drawn in the *naakamthaanezhuthu* style, which literally means the snake writing itself. It is a symbolic depiction of the serpent; it epitomises the hero's virility. The depiction is not easy to comprehend; consequently, it doesn't offer any insights into the snake but rather a metaphorical snake with various implications to decode (See Figure 4.2 given below).

Figure 4.2: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kativanoor Veeran Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

Mekhezhuthu (body drawings) of Theyyam is under the genre of *arichaandhu chotta*; the drawing spans the body from the neck to the abdomen. The literal meaning suggests its process; it is drawn with rice paste and is white in hue.

4.2.2 Angakkaran Theyyam

The legend of Angakkaran Theyyam, the chief deity of the Thiyya community, recounts the life of a warrior who fought to protect the land. The plot depicts the battle of Payyur Hill between hero Angakkaran and the other clans, as well as a person known as Maruthala or an opponent. The phrase "Angakkaran" is noteworthy because it refers to the person who performs *angam*, which is a traditional fight between opposing parties. The Northern Ballads contain elaborate and many descriptions of heroic Kalari soldiers fighting for land and assets at the behest of *naduvazhis* (feudal landowners).

Figure 4.3: Angakkaran Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

Angakkaran's makeover differs significantly from other Theyyams. The *mudi* (headdress) is known as *ichittongal mudi*, which resembles a scorpion. The *mudi* is intended to represent the warrior hero's virile character and swift motions, comparable to those of a scorpion. *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) are entirely in black, with white and red *kuri* (sacred paste is applied on the forehead). According to the Angakkaran deities' custom, it is believed that he wears and bears primarily black, with minimum decoration on his face to represent the hero's stealthy glance. The majority of the artwork focuses on Angakkaran's body rather than his face. The upper arm, chest, and abdomen are

fashioned in three different colours: white, black, and red. The abdomen is particularly heavily covered with white base colour, followed by black symbolic lines and red dots, which could symbolise the hero's wounds acquired during the story's climactic battle.

When it comes to Theyyam's forehand, it is covered completely in black, indicating that the hero painted his face black by himself in order to hide in the conflict with the Maruthala's antagonist, Kellu. The Agakkaran's clothing is made out of cotton and consists mostly of two bands around his hands, *vattodas* around his waist, and the visual depiction of a hero in the form of two *churikas* (small compact sword) in his hands. The legend's storyline is also visible in the visual elements and material culture of the Theyyam makeover, establishing an obvious connection between the oral story and the art of producing Theyyam.

4.2.3 Kshetrapalakan Theyyam

According to legend, Kshetrapalakan is a bachelor hero who arrived from Kodungallur and settled in the kingdom of Zamorin in Calicut. It is stated that around this time, one lady gets excommunicated for having a secret love affair with one of the Kolathiri princes. The saintly bachelor hero accompanied her, recognising her loneliness and innocence. They proceed to Kolathunadu via wooden boat, where she gives birth to a boy child. When the boy matures and reaches his age, he desires to conquer his own empire. However, King Kolathiri refused to accept this and arranged a fight in his stronghold, which is ruled over by three feudal lords: Mannon, Kookkalon, and Allon. This territory is known as Allada Swaroopam, which is in the north of the Cavai River. With the combined might of their three lords, the youth is unable to vanquish or win the battle. But then the saintly bachelor hero Kshetrapalakan appears to assist the young prince. With his determination and tactful diplomatic battle skill, he wins the battle, conquers them, and hands over it to the young prince, the Kerala Varma. This battle is believed to have given rise to the Nileshwaram dynasty. Despite their victory, Kolathiri refuses to give their dynasty possession of the royalty's noble sword and the auspicious silk fabric. After the saintly hero who

helped conquer the dynasty passed away, the people of the dynasty began to worship him as their hero deity, Kshetrapalakan. People have revered him ever since as a symbol of prosperity and splendor, as well as a protective deity against sickness and evil spirits.

Other versions of Kshetrapalakan's story relate his origin to God Shiva. In that, Mahadeva Shiva created Kshetrapalakan and appointed him to Earth, alongside Vettaykkorumakan and Vairajaathan, to battle evil. According to legend, after reaching earth, Kshetrapalakan became the commander of Samoothiri's army in Nediyirippu Swaroopam. King Samoothiri sought a kingdom for his niece's son, Kerala Varma, born to Kolathiri's nephew. So, they proceeded to take the Allada Swarropam, which was ruled by Ettukudukkal lords. Along with the prince, Kshetrapalakan, Vettaykkorumakan, and Vairajathan joined the battle. Kshetrapalakan rose to prominence in this fight, using his tactical diplomatic knowledge to help the prince conquer the region.

Figure 4.4: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kshethrapalakan, drawn by the researcher.

Figure 4.4, showing above is the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kshetrapalakan Theyyam. *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Kshetrapalakan is drawn in the *prakkum kuriyum* style. *Prakk* is another term for pigeon or bird, while *kuri* refers to an auspicious bindi put on the forehead.

The *mukathezhuthu* is a blend of the symbolic picture of a bird and the auspicious bindi applied to the forehead. This *mukathezhuthu* style figuratively associates his eyes with a bird or pigeon. This is meant to symbolise spiritual Kshetrapalakan's sattvic knowledge or spirituality, employing both pigeons and auspicious bindis. Along with *mukathezhuthu* of Kshetrapalakan, he carries a thick black beard and a moustache, as well as two *damshtras* (teeth) on top. The hero's middle-aged virility is enhanced by his black beard and moustache. The *damshtras*, on the other hand, symbolise the angry nature towards the enemies.

Mudi from Khethrapalankan Theyyam is enormous in size, and the upper part of it has a scissor-like structure that looks like a fish's back fin. The *mudi* has been wrapped in black cloth and decorated with eighteen floral motifs aligned symmetrically from top to bottom. In between, there was a depiction of two elephants arranged symmetrically on each side. The elephant's alignment over the headpiece might be designed to symbolise the warriors' strategic alignment of elephants during the battle in which he participated. Showing below the documentation of the Theyyam *kettu* (the art of making of Theyyam) process of Kshethrapalakan Theyyam (see Figures 4.5, 4.6, 4.7 and 4.8 given down below).

Figure 4.5: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) process of Kshetrapalakan Theyyam.

Figure 4.6: Fastening the embellishments of Kshetrapalakan Theyyam.

Figure 4.7: Fastening of *meyyabharanam* (body ornaments) and *Thaadi* (beard).

Figure 4.8: Kshetrapalakan with all its embellishments, in between the performance.

4.2.4 Muthappan Theyyam

Muthappan's traditional narrative states that the Thiyya King and ruler of Eruvessi in Kannur, Ancharamanaykkal Vaazhunavar, and his wife Paadikutti were disappointed because they didn't have children. Paadikkutti, an ardent devotee of Kottiyur Siva, presented a sacrifice to Siva for progeny. On a bright day, she sees Lord Siva in her dreams and the following day. Paadikutti recovered a little, lovely newborn from the river Tiruvanchira while swimming with her seven servants. While in the water, she heard the tickling of a silver anklet and went to investigate. Unexpectedly, a golden peacock-like creature appeared under her fingers, and it was Muthappan, a baby boy. Paadikutti handed the newborn to Kottiyur Siva of the Ayyankara shrine. Siva told her that she should give him elephant milk and horse milk to make him as strong as an elephant and horse. The youngster grew up as the admired son of Paadikutti and Vazhunavar in an atmosphere of affection.

But as the youngster grew older, he began hunting and slaying animals, preparing and eating them with other impoverished village residents, and drinking toddy with them. Ancharamanaykkal Vaazhunavar urged Muthappan never to engage in this conduct since it was against tradition and dignity. Muthappan, on the other hand, was rebellious and rejected convention, becoming a fanatical toddy user and meat eater.

Muthappan brings the meat to the Ayyankara shrine one day after finishing his hunt and begins preparing it. Muthappan's activities provoked Vaazhunavar and Paadikutti to reject their son and leave their home. This enraged Muthappan, who began demonstrating his enchanted abilities by looking and melting the hills of east and west; he then set fire to the forests and groves of south and north through his gaze. Without losing his temper, he approaches the temple and sets it on fire. Paadikutti, who was distraught by all of this activity, cursed him with blindness. She then orders him to flee for the mountains and never return.

Muthappan, armed with a knife, bow, and arrow, set off on his adventure clad in a black loincloth and accompanied by his most beloved hunting dog. When he arrives at Tiruvanchira, he bathes and proceeds to climb a toddy-tapping palm tree while keeping his bow and arrow down. While Muthappan was on the tree enjoying a fresh toddy, the tapper Chandan spotted a man drinking his freshly tapped toddy. Angry Chandan yelled at Muthappan, threatening to shoot him down with arrows. Muthappan was insulted by this action, and he began to stare at Chandan with a fierce gaze that turned him like a statue.

One day later, Chakki, the wife of Chandan, was searching for her husband when she came across a palm tree and found him in the form of a statue. She is astonished to find out that Muthappan, the person sitting on the palm tree, used his magical talents to injure her husband. The helpless Chakki began praying to Muthappan to return her husband. In exchange, she offered to give him his preferred Payankutti and Vellattam, along with other gifts. Muthappan was pleased after hearing this and returned Chandan's living soul to the statue, bringing him back to life. So, Chakki presented what she offered. Muthappan has since been worshipped as a divinity, and his legends have spread across northern Kerala.

This Muthappan narrative is not told in Theyyam thottam songs; instead, the epic hunting story from Kunathoor Hill is told. Muthappan is portrayed as a super hero who hunts with other partner hunters and shoots a large boar with an arrow while accompanied by hunting hounds. After cooking and sharing with his hunting partners, he headed for Fort Perumvalli. Muthappan is worshipped to safeguard agricultural land and animals; he is also regarded as a guide and protector of the pastoral community and cattle.

Makeover of Muthappan is simple and unique; his *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) is known as the *theppum chandrakala* (colour dabbing with crescent), in which face is dabbed with yellow colour by turmeric paste and the crescent in his forehead with rice powder. Then the cheek and nose alar groove is drawn

with the red colour. Muthappan also has a white moustache and beard. Muthappan, as the name implies, is a great-grandfather of the whole community; the white moustache and beard are an ideal embodiment of this notion (see Figure 4.9 given below).

Figure 4.9: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Muthappan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

Mudi, or the crown of Muthappan, is known as *'kodumudi'*. It is conical in shape and ornate, with composite shapes made out of wood constructs, organic medicinal herbs, and floral arrangements. A crescent and a snake diadem have been placed in the middle of the wooden crown. Each side ear of the Muthappan crown is adorned with horn-like wooden ornaments, giving Muthappan's head the appearance of a cow. This element in the mudi might reflect Muthappan's cattle-protective spirit. With all of the leaves and floral designs, the crown's top cylindrical component resembles a green-covered hill. According to a Theyyam performer who specialises in Muthappan, the *mudi* or

crown of Muthappan is thought to represent Lord Shiva's hair or dreadlocks (see Figure 4.10 given below).

Figure 4.10: Muthappan Theyyam performing with all its embellishments.

Muthappan's *mekkezhuthu* is a continuation of the *mukathezhuthu*, using the same turmeric paste and elaborate rice paste paintings. The artwork resembles a landscape on Muthappan's body. There are three mountain types of drawings with rice powder on the chest; behind that, a *vibhuti* kind of drawing can be seen, which extends to the back and is seen as a straight line across the spine bone area. Muthappan's tummy contains a simpler bird picture made with the same rice paste. His entire physique resembles a painting with drawings of mountains and birds. Even the *vibhuti* designs resemble natural trails or rivers. The entire artwork on Muthappan's body represents the landscapes depicted in the hero's story (see Figure 4.11 given below).

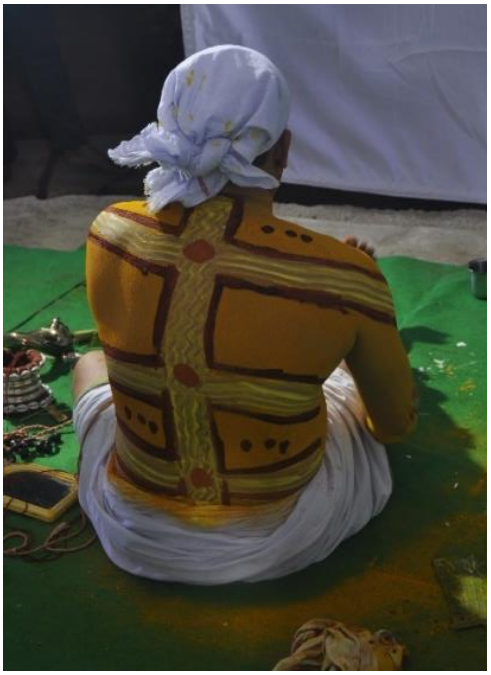

Figure 4.11: *Mekhezhuthu* of Muthappan Theyyam.

The mountain-themed drawing on the chest area, in particular, depicts the mountain that he melted in anger at after his parents abandoned him. The *vibhuti* artwork that covers his entire torso has two distinct types of symbolism at the same time. On the one hand, it appears to be a representation of the paths he adopts after leaving his parents' house. But at the same time, the spinal lines in the body also symbolise the enlightened body of Muthappan.

Figure 4.12: Frontal and rear views of Muthappan Theyyam after the makeover.

4.2.5 Vettaykorumakan Theyyam

The deity Vettaykorumakan, said to have originated from Siva and Parvathi, is venerated by almost all castes and groups without any distinction. Performed by the Vannan community, the Theyyam is unique in appearance. The *mudi* (headdresses) are mainly decorated with *peeli* (peacock feathers), thus the name *peelimudi*. Along with the peacock feather, an exquisite *chethi poov* (jungle geranium) flower garland has been attached. Aside from that, a metallic crescent ornamentation was added, highlighting the Shaivites character of Theyyam. The crescent-shaped steel ornamentation symbolises the water from the *peelimudi*, the flowing of ganga from the hair of Shiva.

When it comes to Vettaykorumakan's *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), the composition of two opposing hues, such as red and green, makes the Theyyam unique. The deity features a black beard, which demonstrates a manly aspect and male iconography. The composition writing on the body is the same hue as *mukathezhuthu's* and has a supporting pattern (see Figure 4.13 given below).

Figure 4.13: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Vettakkorumakan, drawn by the researcher.

Vettaykorumakan has two sorts of metallic weapons: a bow and arrow in one hand and a sword and shield in the other. A notable fact is that the story of the Theyyam intertwines with Shaivite myth and real-life warrior stories. According to tradition, Parvathi Param Shiva gave birth to Vettaykkorumakan when they were hunting on earth. *Vetta* means "hunting," while *makan* means "son." Hence the name 'Vettakkorumakan' (see Figure 4.14 given below).

Figure 4.14: Vettaykkorumakan Theyyam with all the embellishments, drawn by the researcher.

However, a legend about the Theyyam exists in north Kerala: when Parvathi Param Shiva opted to leave their newborn on Earth, they were unable to bring him to the kingdom of Kailasa, where they reside. The story is about a unique incident that occurred when Vettaykorumakan matured into a hero, made possible by his divine power. The miracle is performed to retrieve the territory, including Balussery Fort, from Kurumbranthiri and return it to the original rulers of Nair chieftains. First, Vettaykorumakan proceeded to ask Kumbranthiri to rebuild and return the fort to the previous ruler. Despite accepting the hero's request, Kumbranthiri attempts to oppose him through resistance and trials on the journey to the Balussery fort. Following that, the Vettaykkorumakan's magical power emerges, and the hero and his seven-year-old son use extraordinary strength to overcome all difficulties on their mission. Finally, they approach the fortress. There appeared a massive stack of coconuts at the entryway, but his son's magical skills obliterated it in minutes. Kurumbranthiri was astounded and terrified when he witnessed this, so he reconstructed the fort

in memory of Vettaykuorumakan's seven-year-old son and restored it to its rightful owners, the Nair chieftains.

Nair's community continues to use the boy's name 'Kidavu' and title as a subcaste in the Kadathanadu regions to the present date. According to folklore, Vettaykuorumakan, after obtaining the fort, proceeded to meet his companions and establish the community. First, he went to Kshetrapaalakan in Nediviruppu Swaroopam. He and Kshetrapaalakan then proceeded to Chambravattam to visit Sasthaavu. Three of them then met Vairajaathan and travelled north with three thousand Nair, thirty-six Kurup, and Vazhunnavar, who had ten homes. During their journey, they pass through Neriyot Swaroopam before arriving at Allaatath Swaroopam, where Vettaykorumakan settled at Pulikkatu Madam, now Nileshwaram. And his other companions, like Kshetrapaalakan and Vairajaathan, settled Madiyan Koolam in Kanhangad and Cherathur.

The narrative is significant in Kolathunadu's ancestor worship tradition. Because the deity is worshipped in temples with other deities, and it also has historical significance, the narrative revolves around the migration of three thousand Nair and thirty-six Kurup, together with their heroes Vettaykorumakan, Kshetrapaalakan, and Vairajaathan.

4.2.6 Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam

Kandanaar Kelan is an undeniable former warrior with an idolistic, hard-working spirit. Once, near Ramanthali, Payyanur, lived a woman named Meledath Chakki, a wealthy landlord from the Thiyya caste who rescued a male child from another house nearby the forest called Poombunam in Wayanad district. She called him Kelan and raised him like her own son. Growing up, he grew knowledgeable and dexterous in all fields; he was also a diligent worker, bright, and brave individual; anything he touched became triumphant. His youthful energy and strong effort resulted in high yields on Chakki's agricultural lands, and she prospered year after year. Because of this, Happy Chakki aims to convert the barren plains of Poomgunam, Wayanad, into agricultural land in a similar manner. She then discussed this suggestion with Kelan. Dutiful Kelan

travels to Poomgunam, Waynad, to carry out his mother's request with his agricultural work equipment, including a bow, arrows, and sword. Wayanad is completely covered in magnificent green tropical thick forest, yet that didn't stop passionate Kelan. After eating arrack and toddy, Kelan courageously began chopping off the forest's ranges known as Karimbana kaadu, Nallathenga kaadu, Mukutti kaadu, and Moovar kunnu. After chopping down each square inch of forest preserve for one solitary gooseberry tree in the middle, he set fire to it from all four corners. Then the daring Kellan began jumping from the midst of the jungle to the outside. He gained confidence after successfully jumping three times from each side of the jungle. However, when he entered the forested area near the gooseberry tree to leap, the fierce air and flames collided, resulting in a massive, uncontrollable fire. The fire grows to such an extent that Kelan is unable to escape, so he retreats and climbs the gooseberry tree, which is the only place to hide among the massive flames. Unfortunately, on top of the gooseberry tree resided two dangerous cobras named Kaali and Kaarali. While Kelan was climbing the tree, two deadly cobras crawled over his body and bit his right and left chests. Kelan and the cobras were consumed by the fire and turned to ashes.

According to legend, after the tragedy, the hero Vayanaattu Kulavan crosses the region on his way back from hunting and discovers Kelan's ashes with two cobras on top of him. Seeing this, Vayanaattu Kulavan knocks the ashes with his legs back, and Kelan rises from the ashes to a new life. Vayanaattu Kulavan bestows a blessing on Kelan, saying, "I saw you, Kandanaar Kelan, and you will become a well-known godly figure in the future. The term "Kandanaar" refers to the person who is observed; because Vayanaattu Kulavan noticed him and saved his life, he is known as Kandanaar Kelan. From that time on, Vayanaattu Kulavan was given power to sit to his left and distribute auspicious weapons and rites.

Kandanaar Kelan later invites Vayanaattu Kulavan to his home and provides him meals and nourishment, addressing him as Thondachan. Since then, the Theyyam have performed to venerate the hard-working spirit and warrior Kelan in deified form. Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam is honoured with a

ritual known as *bappidal chadangu* in the Theyyam performance. For the *bappidal chadangu*, worshippers go hunting on the second day before the Theyyam performance. They hunt small animals such as deer and boars and bring them to the performance one day in advance, during *vellattam*. Kandaar Kelan Theyyam gives blessings to the hunters, then he cuts the animal body into three pieces. This ritualistic custom is known as *bappidal chadangu*.

According to Theyyam specialist and performer Vinu Peruvannan, *"Mukathezhuthu* of Kandanaar Kelan is known as *'erattachurul vaal'*, which means 'identical two spiral tails'. The main distinctive feature of this *mukathezhuthu* is the eye drawing. The eye drawing is drawn with kohl over the eyeline and extends to the brow, showing two spiral tails at the end."[73] The drawing pattern of the eye indicates two distinct kinds of symbolic components. The first symbolic element is the fire flames from the narration, which represent Kelan's fear as he stares at the enormous flames in front of him. It is a mirror of what he sees in front of him, filled with terror. Another aspect of the symbolism is the tails of the two snakes that bite him (see Figure 4.15 given below).

[73] Vinu Peruvannan, personal interview, November 20st, 2019, Kannur.

Figure 4.15: *Mukathezhuthu* of Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

The *marchamayam* of Kandanaar Kelan is known as '*naagathaniratta*', referring to the twin snake shape. This is undoubtedly part of the narrative; the two snakes, Kaali and Kaarali, bite Kelan's chest as fire engulfs him. The depiction of the snake appeared as a couplet over Kelan's torso, with its heads positioned on the left and right chests, respectively, and its tails reaching the lower abdomen. Theyyam's *mudi* is comparable to Kativanoor Veeran, the classic hero archetype known as the *pookatti mudi*. A *pookatti mudi* is a sophisticated short headpiece with multiple independent pieces of wooden ornamentation assembled together to make a single *mudi*. The pointed *makudam* (crown with concentrated energy in its centre and pointing to the sky) is created in the middle above the *mudi*. This adornment is meant to reflect the deity's great energy and strength.

Based on legends, Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam recreates the fire jump as part of the ritual performance to transcendentally reconstruct the awful environment Kelan experienced. It is unusual for a Theyyam to leap or run into flames when clad in cotton and silk clothing; those that do are generally dressed in *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) and other fabrics that do not catch fire easily. However, in the context of Kandanaar Kelan, these characteristics contradict the fact that Theyyam tend to be dressed with traditional cotton and silk garments. Perhaps since Kelan is a hero who became trapped in an unexpected fire while performing heroic exploits, the Theyyam's costume lacks fireproof elements (see Figure 4.16 given below).

Figure 4.16: Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam just before the fire leaping ritualistic performance.

Given down below are some of the moments from the fire leaping ritualistic performance of the Kandanaar Kelan Theyyam (see Figures 4.17 and 4.18).

Figure 4.17: Kandanaar Kelan in between the fire leaping ritualist performance.

Figure 4.18: Kandanaar Kelan after the fire leaping ritualistic performance.

4.2.7 Vayanaattu Kulavan (Thondachan)

Vayanattu Kulavan, also known as Thondachan. Thondachan refers to an elderly person or a great ancestor. According to legend, Vayanattu Kulavan was created when Lord Shiva plucks his dreadlocks in rage and beats on his left thigh. It also states that Vayanattu Kulavan was created by crushing Shiva's thigh.

There was once a three-dark coconut tree in Kailasam that yielded wonderful beverages from its lower portion every day. While Shiva, disguised as a hunter, roams around the forest, he happens to witness the extraction of a beverage from a coconut tree, which he then proceeds to drink. After drinking the beverage, he became heavily boozed and started a frivolous dance in front of his wife Parvathy. Shiva's daily misbehaviour annoyed her, and she wanted to put an end to it in the future. So, she searches and finds the source of the problem, which is the dark coconut tree in the garden beside Kailasa. She uses her strength to move the beverage extraction location from the bottom to the top of the coconut tree. When Shiva returns the next day to enjoy the beverage in the garden, he notices that the extraction spot for the liquid from the coconut tree has changed to the upper portion. Shiva becomes angry when he notices this and breaks his dreadlock, beating them against his thighs. The thigh bursts out, revealing a new deity, his divine offspring, Vayanaattu Kulavan. Shiva assigned him the task of gathering the beverage from the coconut tree in the Kailasa Garden. But, at some point in time, the revered youngster sampled the liquid he had collected; it was delicious and joyful. When Shiva discovered that his divine son was drinking his best loved beverage every day, he told him not to drink it and to avoid hunting in the forest garden. However, he ignores him and continues to drink the beverage before hunting in the forest garden every day. While Shiva discovers that his son is ignoring his warning, he becomes the target of Shiva's fury. Shiva's rage caused his son's eyeballs to shatter and fall into the extraction pot. In agony, his holy child pleaded for compassion for his life. So, compassionate Shiva brings him to Earth with the blessings of

poykannu (false eyes), *mula choottu* (bamboo fire torch), *vithu pathram* (grain vessel), and *mula villu* (bamboo bow).

During the journey, while the bamboo fire lamp burns Vayanattu Kulavan's eyes, he throws away all the things—the grain jar, pseudo-eyes, and bamboo fire lamp. These items fell on the north side of the house of Aadhi Paramban Kannan, Wayanad's first farmer. Aadhi Paramban was astonished to witness this item quivering and vibrating on the north side of his house. While Aadhi Paramban was afraid to touch these items, a supernatural voice instructed him to take them and store them inside the home. The divine element of Shiva originally came to Wayanad, which is why he is known as Vayanattu Kulavan. Then people began to worship him as Theyyam.

Vayanattu Kulavan's narrative also has a connection to the Muslim community; it is said that Vayanattu Kulavan landed the earth at Wayanad and later spared the life of a Muslim man named Kunjaali from the gallows. Vayanattu Kulavan saves Kunjaali's life, who was sentenced to death by hanging for an offence of negligence of which he was accused. With the divine power of Vayanattu Kulavan, Chiraykkal Thampuraan changes his mind and refuses to hang Kunjaali. In exchange, Kunjaali offered a banquet dedicated to the divine Vayanattu Kulavan, for which Vayanattu Kulavan requested the same extract beverage from the coconut tree, toddy. Even though Kunjaali's Muslim beliefs prohibit it, he brings it and dedicates it to Vayanattu Kulavan in a highly auspicious manner.

The Theyyam performance concludes with a ceremony known as *'bhonam samarpikkal'* (meal devotion), due to the story's connection to the Muslim man Kunjaali. In this ceremony, the old person wraps his head with a cotton towel and hands over the newly extracted toddy to Vayanattu Kulavan Theyyam. The senior person here is Kunjaali's Theyyam; he covers his head when serving toddy because it is taboo in Muslim society.

Vayanattu Kulavan's primary embellishment is his silver eyes, which are the ornamentation that conceals the eyes of the Theyyam. The embellishment is

the symbolic representation of the pseudo-silver eye that Shiva gave while he begged for mercy. Even with these eyes, he is unable to see; therefore, he performs as if he is blind. In a way, it signifies Shiva's mercy, serving as a powerful symbol of divine safeguarding, even though the performer seems to be blind—a testament to trust and surrender to a higher power. The use of fire torches, bows, arrows, and knives in the ceremony emphasises the practical components of coconut tapping while simultaneously evoking a connection to divine powers through auspicious symbols.

The Theyyam *mudi*, also known as *kothacha mudi*, is rather small in size compared to other Theyyams; the front portion of mudi is exceptionally stretched outward, like an umbrella. *Mukathezhuthu* of the Theyyam is known as '*vattakannezhuthu*', which means round eye drawing; in this the cheeks are embellished of the drawing with *iranji poov* iconography (Mimosops Elengi). This is to represent the benevolent nature of the Theyyam. The fundamental feature of this type, as the name implies, is the round eye. This *mukathezhuthu* is peculiar in its complexity of drawing; it contains various floral motifs that create a complicated, intricate design (see Figure 4.19 given below).

Figure 4.19: *Mukathezhuthu* of Vayanattu Kulavan, drawn by the researcher.

Mekkezhuthu, or the *marchamayam* of the Theyyam, is known as *arichandhu kuri*. In this manner, several black and red dots are painted on the performer's body, thus the word *kuri* (sacred tilak).

4.2.8 Thekkan Kariyathan

Two warriors, Pata Nair of Palar Veedu (home) and Kelendra Nair of Palakunathu, went hunting for leisure. In the middle of the voyage, they stop at Karimkulakal's house and request food. The women in the household promised to provide meals following the hunt. When their hunts are in vain, they take a bath by a pond. Inside, they discovered two huge fish, which they attempted to catch but missed. They return to the women's house, disappointed. However, they were surprised when they discovered the same fish inside the house's well. While the lady dips a plantain leaf into the water, the fish enter. Thus, using the leaves, the fish was captured from the well. After that, the lady cuts and cooks them. However, with divine might, the pieces of fish emerge from the frying pot and mock them. Seeing this woman confirms that the fish is a celestial creature with Shaivite and Vaishnavite characteristics.

Later, the fish transforms into two divinities, who become her children. The children are later named Thekkan Kariyathan and Kannikkorumakan. After getting their names, they joined Kalari to learn all the martial skills and weapon tactics. They became adept warriors, so they fashioned a bow out of a massive palm tree for themselves. In search of the bowstring, they travel a long distance. They took a break on the banks of the Mathalam River in the middle of their expedition. In the river, with the help of a canoe, the couple Chandan Thandan and Thirvellur Thandathi were taking the offerings, such as toddy and rooster, to their deity. Observing this, Thekkan Kariyathan asked for some portion of the offering and toddy. But the couple opposed it and refused to provide it to the heroes. Hearing this, Kariyathan became angry and threw stones at the boat, forcing it to get stuck in mud; then the rooster died, and Thandan went insane. Thandathi, seeing Kariyathan's miraculous actions, prayed for forgiveness and vowed to provide their necessary share of offerings. Then everything returns to

normal, and Thandan's lunacy fades. However, one boy named Kaikkolan from the shoreline mocks the Kariyathan's actions. Angry Kariyathan sliced off the boy's hand and palm without hesitation. The youngster also pleaded for mercy, and in exchange, he vowed to serve as a servant perpetually; as a result, the wrist and palm reattached to the boy's hand.

After their incredible encounters, they go in search of bowstrings and discover them. They then return to their home and position the bow in a unique spot with excellent precision. While the bow is touching the earth, the Kali and Kuttichathan emerge from the pit. The bow creates a loud boom that resonates from north to south hill forts, prompting the monarch, Pandi Perumal, to jump out of bed. As a result, he plans to approach the two heroes and issue an order. However, while the heroes go to visit Pandi Perumal, the door guard refuses to allow the heroes to enter the palace; they throw him into the well. Finally, King Pandi Perumal comes to unlock the door. In order to demonstrate their bravery, the king ordered them to show some magical powers. They brought Ganges to dry land and cut down seven trees to cover their shields. Witnessing this miracle, the king understands their true strength; thus, he gives them the task of bringing tiger milk to heal the queen's illness. Heroes delegated this mission to Kaikkolan. He travels to the wilderness and successfully captures the tiger, bringing it back to the palace for milk. After all of this, the monarch commanded the heroes to execute two of his rivals, Kannatiyan Naidu and Vallathan Kammal. So, the heroes take their lives without any hesitation. They were thereafter revered as heroic deities in recognition of their noble devotion to the king and the realm.

The *mukathezhuthu* is called the *anjupulli aanakaal*, which means "five dots with elephant legs." Theyyam's eyes are drawn to resemble an elephant. It reveals the true valorous core of the Theyyam. The elephant’s image is placed strategically on the performer's face, symbolizing cosmic harmony and balance. The elephant-like eyes are drawn with bold, sweeping lines, representing strength, wisdom, and the all-seeing nature of the deity. These features

emphasize the Theyyam's divine presence and its role as a protector and guide for the community (see Figure 4.20 given below).

Figure 4.20: *Mukathezhuthu* of Thekkan Kariyathan, drawn by the researcher.

The symbolic representation of Theyyam's eyes as those of an elephant not only underscores the intricate link between divine presence and community but also reinforces the values of strength and wisdom that are essential to societal cohesion. Strategically crafted on the performer's face, these bold and sweeping lines encapsulate the essence of the deity, reminding participants of their role as protectors and guides within their cultural milieu. This vivid imagery serves as a medium through which cosmic harmony is conveyed, fostering a collective identity anchored in reverence and resilience. Thus, Theyyam transcends mere performance; it embodies a profound philosophical connection that nurtures both spiritual beliefs and communal bonds.

Mekkezhuthu, or bodily drawing in Theyyam, is exemplified by the *'naaychulli'* design, which bears a subtle resemblance to an animal face. This design complements the *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) of Theyyam, with patterns that echo animalistic features. The resemblance to an animal face in the

mekkezhuthu highlights Theyyam's connection to nature's primordial and elemental energies, emphasizing its role as a bridge between humanity and the natural world. The *mekkezhuthu* ritual, distinguished by its peculiar '*naaychulli*' themes, not merely captures the essence of animal shapes but also forges a deep bond between the performers and the primordial forces of nature. This bodily art enhances the *mukathezhuthu*, enriching the performance with vibrant, animalistic motifs that resonate deeply within the cultural fabric. Ultimately, *mekkezhuthu* bridges human experience with primal instincts and celebrates a harmonious existence with nature's raw energies. Through this artistic expression, Theyyam conveys profound spiritual truths, inviting participants and spectators alike to reflect on their interconnectedness with all living beings.

The *mudi* of the Theyyam is called *kozhupattam*, and it is a complex structure with various forms and shapes designed with bamboo sticks and tendrils from the plants. further it is decorated with flowers and areca sheath and finally attached to the '*naagapadam* (serpent hood diadem) for the finished structure. The addition of the *naagapadam* symbolises protection and divine energy, enhancing the sanctity of the structure. The process of creating this *mudi* involves multiple skilled artisans who collaborate to achieve the intricate designs. Bamboo sticks are split and shaped into an elaborate framework, while the tendrils and other organic materials are carefully intertwined to form delicate patterns. The decorative elements, like flowers and areca sheaths, are chosen not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their cultural significance, as they are considered sacred in the Theyyam tradition. The *mudi* creation process stands as a testament to the remarkable craftsmanship and cultural heritage embedded in this unique art form. Skilled artisans meticulously bring intricate designs to life, utilizing bamboo sticks to construct a robust yet delicate framework that serves as the backbone of each piece. The intertwining of organic materials not only enhances the visual appeal but also speaks to a deep-seated respect for nature and its resources. Furthermore, the careful selection of decorative elements such as flowers and areca sheaths showcases a harmonious blend of aesthetics and cultural significance, ensuring that each *mudi* is not

merely an object but a narrative woven into the fabric of tradition. This synthesis of artistry, materiality, and cultural expression encapsulates the essence of *mudi*, making it a true reflection of both skill and heritage.

4.2.9 Kannikorumakan Theyyam (Manicheri Daivam)

Kannikorumakan is a medical divinity, also known as Dhanvantari. Once, a woman named Vaakathoor Akkam Thammissery, who resided in Poothariyadi *kotta* (Poothariyadi fort), lacked an inheritance or heir for her whole kingdom and possessions. Bandits abducted her for jewels and money; fortunately, she escapes. But she is imprisoned on Kodagu Hill, so she accepts her fate and lives there as a solitary. She prays for a child and receives one through a boon from Lord Shiva. She cheerfully named the infant Kelu. Later, an astrologer attended her home and foretold that he would become king in her own land. The young man is now the sole successor to the throne of Poothariyadi *kotta* (fort). But back in the fort, her brother, the present-day king, is unaware that Akkam is alive. Kelu was an intelligent kid who quickly picked up new talents and knowledge. He became competent in the practice of ayurvedic medicinal remedies. While he questioned about his father's existence, his mother told him about her life, including how she was kidnapped and lost her brother and kingdom before coming to Kodagu Hills. After finishing his martial lessons and other life skills, Kelu embarked on an expedition to find out his family roots and kingdom. At the start of the voyage, his mother gives him a chain comprised of a thousand pearls that her brother had given her before she'd been kidnapped. After a lengthy journey, Kelu arrives at Poothariyadi *kotta* (fort). Unfortunately, he was compelled to battle his uncle without knowing it. Kelu defeats his uncle and discloses his identity by exposing the pearl chain. Seeing that his uncle recognises the young warrior as his sister's son and only heir, with pomp and ceremony, his uncle crowns Kelu as the future king of the Poothariyadi Kotta. After becoming king, he brings his close friend Shaasthavu with him to guarantee the well-being of his kingdom's citizens.

Many years later, three friends and the Karanavars (family heads) of three households, Maanicheri, Idavalathupakkam, and Moovakattu, discover a pearl of divine power. When it is placed in the Manicheri family home, they shimmer and vibrate on their own. After a while, the pearl, with its magical power, jumps from the family home to the nearby *paala maram* (scholar tree). When the Maanicheri family observes this and is surprised, they visit an astrologer to determine the cause. Astrologers found out that the pearl is not ordinary; it embodies a deity. So, from that point forward, the family built a temple for this divinity.

Kannikorumakan's *mukathezhuthu* is also known as *anjupulli aanakaalu*. As previously mentioned, the name "*anjupulli aanakaalu*" is symbolic, with "*anjupulli*" representing the five dots and "*aanakaalu*" referring to the elephant's leg. They work together to create a fundamental yet evocative visual motif in *mukathezhuthu*, combining simplicity with profound meaning. The elephant, a symbol of power, wisdom, and grandeur, is an appropriate illustration of the heroic traits associated with the individual being honoured. In Kannikorumakan, the *mukathezhuthu* acts as both a visual and narrative device. It conveys the valour and greatness of the hero through a culturally resonant emblem. The five dots may signify the five elements of nature, the directions, or even protective deities, reinforcing the hero's connection to cosmic and earthly powers. This art form, often rendered with ritualistic precision, bridges the realms of the divine and the mortal. It captures the essence of the hero’s identity and their indomitable spirit, transcending mere decoration to become a sacred symbol of honour and reverence.

Theyyam's *mekkezhuthu* is drawn employing an approach known as *'arichaandu',* which translates as rice paste. The pattern in this design also depicts the deity's malevolent aspect, which is a continuation of the *mukathezhuthu.* The *arichaandu* patterns are extremely detailed and have significant symbolic connotations. The strong, symmetrical designs communicate the divine's raw, untamed existence and are said to ward off malicious forces while inspiring awe in believers. This visual capability is more

than just ornamental; it acts as an interface between people and the divine. The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), along with the *arichaandu* body patterns, makes sure that the Theyyam performance encompasses the essence of the god, presenting the community with a deep spiritual experience. These sacred art forms demonstrate a strong relationship between mythology, devotion, and the region's cultural past.

Theyyam *mudi,* also known as *peelimudi,* is a powerful emblem of divine presence and strength. The complex arrangement of peacock feathers not only enhances its visual splendour, but it also represents the Theyyam performance's intrinsic sense of mystery and duality. This tall and beautiful headdress exemplifies the spiritual significance of Theyyam ceremonies, in which the performer acts as a vehicle for the deity, directing its energies to bless or reprimand the followers.

4.2.10 Kudiveeran Theyyam

Kudiveeran is regarded as the most valiant fighter among all the warriors. He was born into a renowned warrior's noble family that mastered all martial arts. He used to be a nightmare for his opponents while also saving his people and loved ones. His mighty popularity rose day by day. Because of their jealousy, his opponents eventually spread lies and falsehoods against him. Seeing all of this, Yama, the Lord of Death, decides to take the powerful warrior's spirit to paradise. He believes that warriors like him deserve a better location; the envious people on Earth do not deserve him. So Yama approaches Kudiveeran and invites him to follow him to paradise. He followed Yama and began the journey. He vanished as they both approached Mayathan *kadavu* (ghat). Following his departure, the people of his homeland began to appreciate the importance. His absence made those who lived there feel uncomfortable and unprotected, so they deified him in their homes. To respect his memory, the deified Theyyam is invoked.

The artist created the *mudi* in the traditional heroic deity style known as *pookatti mudi*. *Pookatti* is the art of tying flowers, which entails making a

complex shape of a flower using diverse symbolic forms or components of the flower. *Mudi* develops its complicated structure by combining various shapes and forms. Its semicircular shape is formed by two symmetrically opposed wing-like pieces called *'puram kani*', which meet on opposite sides of the head. The *'puram kaani'* is flexible and formed by arranging peacock feather stems near together. Because of its construction*, the mudi* bends slightly to the front. Another small structure, known as *'bammada pala'* and *'nheri',* would be affixed. A *'thanda*' was also built around the *mudi's* perimeter. *Mukathezhuthu* and *mekkezhuthu* of Theyyam are likewise adorned in a traditional heroic fashion, similar to Kativanoor Veeran. The intricate design of the *mudi* showcases a rich tapestry of cultural symbolism and craftsmanship. The *'puram kani'* bends gracefully, with its peacock feather stems converging at opposing heads, embodying the beauty and fluidity of nature. Complementing this are the *'bammada pala'* and *'nheri',* which serve both functional and aesthetic purposes by securing small structures around the *mudi,* enhancing its visual appeal while upholding traditional practices. Encircling this majestic creation is the *'thanda',* a protective framework that surrounds this magnificent artwork, ensuring the *mudi's* integrity and value. Finally, the use of *mukathezhuthu* and *mekkezhuthu* apparel conjures a feeling of heroic heritage reminiscent of Kativanoor Veeran, putting this magnificent costume into historical perspective. These aspects, when combined, not only demonstrate creative ingenuity but additionally highlight a cultural history that has endured over centuries (see Figure 4.21 given below).

Figure 4.21: Kudiveeran Theyyam performing with all its embellishments.

4.2.11 Palanthayi Kannan/ Vishnumoorthi Theyyam

Palanthayi Kannan was the cowboy for local landlord Kuruvadan Kurup in the Nileshwaram district. He was subsequently banished for the crime of falling in love with his daughter and instructed to never return upon penalty of death. In exile, Kannan became a *komaram* (oracle) and resided with a family that had long worshipped Lord Vishnu in the north Mangalapuram region. Kannan longs to return to his hometown, believing that all of his grievances have been resolved. For safety, the family's elder women offered Kannan a sword from the family's Vishnu shrine statue. Kannan travels to Nileshwaram through the rivers Chandragiri, Ullalam, and Chittari, which are part of Mangalapuram. After perfecting his blade, Kannan met Kanathadan, Kuruvatan Kurup's servant. Kannan handed him some rice and told him to make rice gruel and come back after his bath. Kannan then goes to the lake to bathe, keeping his sword on the banks. Meanwhile, instead of cooking rice gruel, Kanathadan informs Kuruvatan Kurup about Kannan's impending arrival to exact his retribution. Angry Kuruvatan Kurup rushes to the lake and brutally kills Kannan

with his sword. Following this coldblooded murder, a series of strange events began to unfold. Kannan's sword began slashing all of the lotus flowers in the lake and travelling from one place to another. Later, it landed at a fishermen's cottage near Kottapuram. They erected a *stanam* (shrine) to worship Kannan after seeing this supernatural activity and being instructed by an astrologer to do so at the same location where a sword had fallen. Kuruvadan Kurup is believed to have given up his pride and provided wood and stone for the construction of *stanam* out of fear of Kannan's spirit. Palantayi Kannan was worshipped and became an icon against societal injustices.

Mukathezhuthu of Palantayi Kannan is drawn in *kozhipushpam* and *kodumpurikam* designs. *kozhipushpam* (cockscomb flower) is a flower endemic to largely tropical parts of Africa and America. The flower's similarity with the red comb on the rooster's head suggests its name. In this *mukathezhuthu* technique, the artist portrays Palantayi Kannan's cheek to the *kozhipushpam,* allowing the audience to experience the Kannan's youthful, virile, and lovestruck personality. Kannan's eye, which is portrayed as *kodumpurikam*, meaning heavy eye brow, represents the tremendous hatred and vengeance that it retains in its spirit against his murderer landlord. The *mukathezhuthu* technique serves as a vibrant canvas through which the multifaceted character of Palantayi Kannan is brought to life, reflecting the duality of his nature. With the artist's intricate portrayal of Kannan's cheek and eye, we witness a representation that captures his youthful exuberance and passionate demeanor, epitomized by the symbolism of *kodumpurikam*. Yet, it is Kannan's heavy brow that casts a shadow over this youthful visage, revealing an undercurrent of intense hatred and vengeance that complicates his character. Thus, the interaction of these aspects exposes Kannan's lovestruck demeanour while simultaneously emphasising the deeper emotional anguish that defines him, making the *mukathezhuthu* approach an effective vehicle for addressing such complex folkloric topics (see Figure 4.22 given below).

Figure 4.22: *Mukathezhuthu* of Palantayi Kannan, drawn by the researcher.

Palantayi Kannan's *mudi* (headgear) is relatively small but elaborate, with complicated composite structures and shapes that interconnect to form it. The *mudi* is known as *'thalamallikaykku mele kereedam*.' Over certain male Theyyam, this structural component *'thalamallika'* is embellished, and it refers to the jasmine blossom on top of the head. *'Mele kireedam,'* on the other hand, refers to the crown at the top. As a result, it is a mixture of two composite crown designs, one put on top of the other. The layered crown over the jasmine flower atop Palantayi Kannan's head represents the hero's radiant, benevolent character. The representation of jasmine over the head also represents the hero's love-struck personality. Along with its benevolent features, the Theyyam also possesses certain malevolent properties, which are carried by the snake diadem above the Theyyam's frontal piece of *mudi* (headgear). The intricate design of Palantayi Kannan's Composite Crown serves as a profound representation of the duality inherent in the hero's character (see Figure 4.23 given below).

Figure 4.23: Palantayi Kannan Theyyam is performing with a composite crown.

By seamlessly merging two distinct crown designs, it captures the radiant benevolence that defines Kannan while simultaneously acknowledging the complexities of his love-struck nature, symbolized by the delicate jasmine flower adorning his head. This floral emblem highlights not only his romantic inclinations but also serves as a reminder of the vulnerability that accompanies such passion. Above this, the snake diadem perched on Theyyam's frontal piece of *mudi* introduces an element of malevolence, suggesting that even within noble intentions, darker forces may linger. Together, these elements reflect a rich tapestry of traits that embody both light and shadow, revealing a hero whose very essence is shaped by love and conflict alike.

Palantayi Kannan's *maarchamayam* (body costume) differs uniquely from those of other male deities; it is called *koralaaram,* which is derived from the Malayalam word for neck garland. *Koralaaram* is completely made of *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds), spanning the neck to the base. Because of the *koralaaram,* only Theyyam's head, hands, and a tale-like structure emerging from it are visible. The total covering of Theyyam with *kuruthola* (tender

coconut fronds) symbolises Kannan's drowning scene after being slayed by Kuruvatan Kurup with his sword (see Figure 4.24 given below).

Figure 4.24: Palantayi Kannan performing with *koralaaram.*

Overall, it is a distressing image for worshippers, reminding them of the tragedies and injustices that existed in society. The *koralaaram,* crafted from *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds), serves not only as a striking visual element in the Theyyam ritual but also as a profound symbol of cultural narratives and collective memory. Enveloping the figure's head and hands, it evokes the poignant tale of Kannan's drowning after his defeat by Kuruvatan Kurup, encapsulating a moment of tragedy that resonates deeply with worshippers. This garland acts as a haunting reminder of societal injustices and the suffering that permeates human experience, urging viewers to reflect on their own histories and the broader context of communal struggles. Through its intricate design and evocative symbolism, the *koralaaram* invites both reverence and introspection, bridging the past with contemporary understandings of loss and resilience.

The deity's figure is additionally referred to as Narasimha in present-day; the avatar of Vishnu came from a pillar to consume Hiranyakashipu as a result of Prahlada's earnest prayers. As a result, the god, known as

Vishnumoorthy Theyyam, is influenced by Vaishnavism. Some symbolic emblems refer to Lord Vishnu's idol. The Theyyam's tail-like protrusion from its belly to the exterior resembles Lord Vishnu's lotus flower, which develops from his abdomen. And again, the snake diadem above the Theyyam mudi is comparable to the serpent that adorned Lord Vishnu's head.

4.2.12 Poomaruthan Theyyam

The myth of Poomaruthan is mysterious. Once Arya Poomaala Bhagavathy went to collect the blossoms from the heavenly garden. Thousands of her maids accompanied her, each carrying thousands of flower baskets. They began picking flowers one by one and filled the basket with *chethi* (jungle geranium), *chembarathi* (hibiscus), *chembakam* (chambak), *chemanthi* (chrysanths), and *pichakam* (pitchy). However, the guardians of the heavenly garden observed this and stopped them. Confused, Poomaala Bhagavathy seeks assistance from one of the guards to avoid being stopped. He emerged from Shiva's holy existence and resided inside the blossom in the form of wind. He assisted Bhagavathy in handling the situation. She gave him a nickname, 'Poomaaruthan,' derived from the words *'poov'* (flower) and *'maaruthan'* (wind). Later on, he became her brotherly friend. She once longed to visit Earth to view *malanad* (the hill country or Malabar area). However, they do not have a ship to travel to *malanad*. Meanwhile, Arya King's daughter, Arya Pookanni, was fasting and headed to the heavenly garden. The moment Arya Poomaala Bhagavathi saw the princess, she possessed her and made her sick. Knowing this, the king consulted an astrologer, who determined that the possessed deity on the princess's body is Poomala Bhagavathi and that she has specific requirements. As a result, the king designed her wooden ship for her journey to *malanad* with the creative magnificence of Vishwakarma.

With that ship, Poomaala Bhagavathi and Poomaruthan set off towards *malanad*. They travelled to several places before arriving at the coastline known as Oriyara in Cheruvathur. According to the legend, the lord and god of the Oriyara temple, Vishnumurthy, greets the celestial deities Arya Poomala

Bhagavathi and Poomaruthan with *karikku* (tender coconut water). They are thought to have enshrined and remained there after that. In another version of the narrative, Poomaaruthan and Poomala travelled to Ezhimala (present-day Kannur) and were enshrined there. As a result, Ramanthali and Kuruvantatha each have their own shrine, which is also regarded as the goddesses' initial shrine.

Poomaaruthan's Theyyam performed and worshipped at the shrines of Poomaala Bhagavathi, although Poomaala Bhagavathy does not have a Theyyam. Poomaruthan's *mukathezhuthu* is known as *'kodumpuriyam eranjipookuri*,' which refers to the combination of a heavy brow and the bindi of the *Iranji poov* or *elengi* flower (Mimusops elengi). These aspects represent beauty and elegance, highlighting the cultural significance of the Poomaaruthan rites. The complex features of the *mukathezhuthu* demonstrate the craftsmanship involved in the Theyyam performances, where each sign has a deep meaning. The upper portion of the eye drawing, known as *Kodumpuriyam,* is shaped like *mudira'* (horse gram) pulses. Because of this pulse's association with the nutrition of the oxen and horse, this curved brow is supposed to represent the agility and strength of the male divinity. This design symbolises power and vitality. The *mukathezhuthu* artwork not only represents the cultural significance of the Poomaaruthan, but it also underlines the close link between nature and the rites associated with the region's Theyyam performances.

The Poomarurthan Theyyam's *mekhezhuthu* is drawn in a manner known as *'maaril dhalam,'* which means flower petals over the chest. As the name implies, the artwork displays a chest covered with flower petals and flowery motifs. This image depicts the Theyyam's attributes, as the god disguises himself inside the bloom in the form of wind. The intricate designs and vibrant hues of the petals are not only visually stunning but also carry deep symbolic meanings, representing positivity, purity, and the connection between the divine and the earthly realms. Through this artistry, the Theyyam *mekhezhuthu* invites devotees to experience a profound spiritual journey, celebrating the cyclical nature of life and the beauty that emerges from it.

The Poomarurthan Theyyam's *mudi* is known as *pothacha mudi*, which translates as encircling headgear. This type of headgear contains a variety of structural forms, such as circles, semicircles, and triangles. The artist creates this headgear by using all of these elements in certain combinations to reflect the metaphorical structure of a butterfly. This *mudi's* structural shape is designed to depict the surrealistic character of Poomaaruthan as described in the narrative. He is believed to be a divinity disguised as the wind within the flower. The butterfly is a creature that stays inside flowers and flies using wind and air. Thus, the artist who designs Poomaruthan's *mudi* in the shape of a butterfly is attempting to capture the surrealistic part of his character. The intricate interplay between the surrealistic design of the *mudi* and the ethereal nature of Poomaruthan beautifully illustrates the artist's vision. By embodying divinity through the delicate disguise of wind within a flower, Poomaruthan transcends ordinary representation, inviting viewers to experience a deeper connection with nature's mysteries. The choice to incorporate the butterfly—a symbol of transformation that dances gracefully on currents of air—further enhances this narrative, as it mirrors the fluidity and transcendence central to both the *mudi's* structure and Poomaruthan's essence. This synthesis not only captures the surrealistic qualities intended by the artist but also emphasizes a profound dialogue between form and meaning, ultimately enriching our understanding of both character and creation.

4.3 Formal and structural symbolism of Theyyam hero worship

The *mudi* has a significant impact on the structural symbolism of Hero Theyyam, as it does on other types of Theyyam. It demonstrates the significance, strength, and beauty of the Theyyam. Hero deity headgear is smaller than other forms of Theyyam. It is constructed by assembling several little bits and parts to get the right shape according to the deity's particular characteristics. The majority of its headgear's interior and exterior decorations are formed by mixing composite forms and shapes inspired by natural flora and fauna patterns. Artists make extensive use of triangular and semicircular forms

to attain the structural outlook. These shapes and forms, in general, contribute to the cosmological interactions with Theyyams. Thus, Theyyam's *mudi* combines geometrical natural designs from the land and the universe. The bright craftsmanship of Theyyam *mudi* captures a complex relationship between spirituality and geometry, with the deities' qualities delicately mirrored in their form. The seamless integration of interior and exterior decorations, rich with a tapestry of composite forms alongside motifs inspired by the natural world, creates a visually stunning experience that transcends mere aesthetics. The prevalent use of triangular and semicircular shapes not only contributes to the structural integrity but also enhances the cosmological significance of the Theyyams, fostering a deeper connection between the divine and the earthly realm. This unique blend of design elements not only celebrates cultural heritage but also invites contemplation on the harmonious relationship between geometry, nature, and spirituality in this captivating tradition.

4.3.1 Triangular shapes in *mudi*

The employing of the fundamental triangular shape in *mudi* (headgear) may be found in most forms of Theyyam, including the mother goddess categorisation, as previously indicated. In general, triangle shapes are likely found in the majority of metaphysical forms that attempt to connect their power to the universe. For instance, ceremonial and religious structures can be viewed as having a single converging point on top of them. This is claimed to receive and send power from the universe and back, establishing a connection with it. This connection is believed to enhance the spiritual experience of practitioners and devotees, allowing them to tap into the divine energies that permeate the cosmos. Consequently, these triangular formations not only serve as symbolic representations but also as practical conduits for the flow of spiritual power during rituals and ceremonies. The exploration of triangular formations in spirituality reveals their profound significance as both symbolic representations and practical conduits for divine energy. These geometric shapes are not merely aesthetic; they are believed to facilitate the reception and transmission of universal power, creating a dynamic flow that enhances spiritual experiences.

By harnessing these energies during rituals and ceremonies, practitioners can deepen their connection to the cosmos, tapping into a source of strength that transcends the ordinary. Ultimately, triangular formations embody a harmonious blend of form and function, illustrating how geometry can serve as a bridge between the material and spiritual realms, inviting individuals to engage with the mysteries of existence on a deeper level.

According to Tantric symbolism, the ascending triangle represents both the masculine essence and the metaphysical form of fire. Through the masculine principle, it represents the ideal male archetype or the apex of contemplative strength and enlightenment, Shiva or Purush. The utilisation of a complex of triangular forms and the semi-circle can be noticed in many male Theyyam *mudi* (headgear), even though their stories are unrelated to Shaivism, but they do have the upward triangular complex of *mudi* (headgear) to show the male principle. The most notable example is the Kshethrapaalakan Theyyam. The hero Kshethrapaalakan wears a massive triangular-shaped *mudi* (headgear) that is wrapped in black fabric. Because of its large size, the *mudi* (headgear) is occasionally maintained by devotees and Theyyam specialists. According to Tantric manifestations, the black triangle represents fire, which has the element of earth. In Tantric iconography, the true 'fire' (red) is made up of three elements: fire, water, and earth, which are symbolised using colours red, white, and black, respectively. The Theyyams, like the Kativanur Veeran, Thekkan Kariyathan, and other heroes such as Kandanaar Kelan, Kutiveeran Theyyam, and Kaaranavar Theyyam, are also adorned with headgear, which is structured in the triangular and semicircle shapes. The combination of these two types of shapes causes the headgear to extend somewhat outward. The use of triangles and semicircles in these male-centric hero deities results in a mudi that resembles a flower petal. The renowned hero Kativanur Veeran, as well as the other Theyyams, wear the same *mudi* (headgear). The structure and shape of the *mudi* (headgear) resemble the petals from the same flower that represents hero worship. The intricate design of *mudi* (headgear), resembling the delicate shape of flower petals, serves as a powerful symbol within the context of male-centric

hero deities. This floral imagery is further enriched by the geometric elements of triangles and semicircles that are integral to their representation, emphasising strength and valour in figures such as Kativanur Veeran and other Theyyams. The harmonised form and shape resemble petals from the same flower, emphasising a shared essence between these deities and showing cultural veneration for hero worship. Together, these paintings constitute a complex tapestry that conveys not only a visual style but also a profound story of manhood and spiritual devotion inside the tradition.

4.3.2 Circular shapes in *mudi* (headgear)

The Vettaykkorumakan and the Vayanaattu Kulavan Theyyam are two examples of male deities with circular *mudi* (headgear). Male-orientated hero deities wear circular-shaped *mudi* (headgear), which differ significantly from feminine goddesses. Male hero deities' circular *mudi* (headgear) are created by combining semi-circular shapes in symmetry, resulting in them protruding slightly to the outside. In the case of Vettaykkorumakan Theyyam, the protruded circle-shaped *mudi* (headgear) serves as an umbrella over the head of the deity, with peacock feathers embellishing its edges. Thus, this *mudi* (headgear) resembles a circular shape with infinite points, similar to the cosmos. This design not only symbolises the deity's protection over his followers but also reflects the vastness of his divine nature. The intricate adornments, such as the peacock feathers, further enhance the aesthetic appeal, connecting the earthly realm with the celestial. The circular shape of the *mudi* (headgear) signifies unity and completeness, mirroring the boundless nature of the universe. This connection emphasizes the deity's omnipresence and the spiritual link between the divine and the devotees. The intricate artistry of *mudi* (headgear) Design serves as a profound testament to the divine protection offered by deities, intertwining aesthetic beauty with spiritual significance. The delicate adornments, particularly the vibrant peacock feathers, not only elevate its visual appeal but also reflect the grandeur of the divine. Its circular form resonates with the infinite nature of the universe, symbolizing an unbroken connection between the deity and the cosmos. This design thus encapsulates the

omnipresence of the divine, forging a deep spiritual bond with devotees who seek solace and guidance. Through *mudi* Design, believers are reminded of their continuous link to a higher power, celebrating both protection and presence in their lives.

Vayanaattu Kulavan's *mudi* (headgear) also has a round form that can be seen from the front. The support of five semicircular forms positioned vertically and varying in size over the top of the *mudi* (headgear) works as an umbrella over the Theyyam's head. Though its vertical semicircle appears to be a support, it is also visually similar to a mountain range over the *mudi* (headgear) or the head of the Theyyam. This edifice appears to represent both the hill ranges of Wayanad and the mountain ranges of Kailasa, as described in the Vayanaattu Kulavan narrative. The elaborate pattern not only improves the visual appeal of the Theyyam, but it also represents the strong cultural relationship between nature and spirituality in this culture. Each curve and contour is a reminder of the beautiful landscapes that inspired the performance, connecting the terrestrial and ethereal dimensions. The Theyyam tradition in Vayanaattu Kulavan is like a vibrant artwork that skilfully binds together the majestic hill ranges of Wayanad and Kailasa, providing a profound visual experience with its exquisite patterns. Each pattern in *mudi* not only attracts the eye but also represents the region's robust cultural attachment to nature and contemplation. Its depiction goes beyond ordinary; it represents a link between both the physical and heavenly dimensions, encouraging audiences to consider how inspired environments impact human expression. Ultimately, Theyyam exemplifies the harmonious interplay of nature and spirituality, strengthening both individual identity and community legacy.

4.4 Colour Symbolism in Theyyam male hero deities

The male hero deities' makeovers, like those in other variations of Theyyam, use a five-colour palette. The colours include red, white, black, yellow, and green. These colours are considered auspicious in the Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions. Red symbolizes life, white embodies purity,

black wards off negative energy, yellow signifies wisdom, and green represents prosperity. The Theyyam makeover uses these five hues in a harmonious way to describe the characteristics of the deities. The majority of male-orientated hero deities are courageous and dynamic; hence, they make significant use of the colour red.

Although these five colours hold specific symbolic meanings within these religious belief systems, and it is reflected in the makeover of Theyyam, it at the same time also carries multiple layers of symbolic value that have evolved over time. As mentioned earlier, their material functions further influence their symbolic significance. For instance, the colour red, particularly in the *mukathezhuthu* and *mekhezhuthu* of Theyyam, is made using vermillion, which symbolises the creative union of the male, the pinnacle of enlightenment, and the feminine, the prakriti or nature's principles. Since the use of these five colours and materials is consistent across all classifications of Theyyam, this unique symbolic meaning remains an integral part of its identity. As a result, it is critical to study the numerous contributions of symbolic meanings associated with these hues, as they arose during the development of this ritual art.

4.4.1 Colour red in evolution History of male deity

The male deities, like the female goddesses, have maintained the same pattern of colour symbolism from the Velan veriyattam of the Sangam era. In the Velan veriyattam, the god for propitiation is 'Murukan,' and the use of red is expressly stated in the propitiation. According to the Sangam poem, Tirumurukarurrupadai, Velan used to wear a red thread on his hand and opposite-coloured fabric on top of each other. Murukan is shown in the poem Paripadal with a red dress and waistline. In his other poems, Kalithokai states that red dresses are appropriate for Mrurukan. The majority of male hero deity archetypes in the Theyyam belief systems are said to protect women's dignity and honour. Similarly, during the Sangam era, the local priest Velan invokes Murukan to banish harmful spirits from lovelorn young females. The Velan veriyattu, an ancient type of Theyyam, is performed after the ritual sacrifices.

Many rituals and material culture from this propitiation are still practiced in modern Theyyam performances. The usage of red *chethis* (jungle geranium) and oleander flowers on top of Velan's kalam is one of the most notable.

Velan's performance utilises a spear to propitiate Murukan, which may still be seen near the idols during Theyyam performances, shrouded in red fabric, even though Murukan devotion has disappeared from the Theyyam belief. Murukan is honoured in various places as the guardian and preserver of women's dignity; for example, the Thirumurugaattruppadai refers to him as "the son with the red spear who is the husband of her radiant brow and stainless chastity."[74] So, in some ways, the use of red colour symbolism in the Theyyam continues the hero archetype ideals of the Murukan, who is the guardian of women's dignity and honour.

The use of red colour symbolism for male heroes has also been observed in various regions of the Indian subcontinent throughout history. These heroes employed red symbols to demonstrate their heroic actions as protectors of land and women. For example, extensive ceremonial use of red symbolism in Indian history may be traced back to the time of Alexander's invasion in 326 BC. According to Strabo's document, Onesicritus claims that many Indians wear red turbans, and their sashes frequently match. These are the periods when Jauhar's ceremonies were originally established. "The dignified tribes who lived in lower Indus fought undisputedly against Alexander, and after the despairing hope for ultimate success, they set themselves, along with their wives and children, to fire."[75] A somewhat comparable ceremony to this is the Saka rite, which is conducted by Rajput warriors who have vowed to battle to the death to safeguard their country and people. They dress in orange and apply vermillion to their faces.

[74] Skandagurunatha.org - Bhagavan Sri Skanda's Divine Online Abode, www.skandagurunatha.org/works/thiru-murugaa-trruppadai/thiru-murugaa-trruppadai.pdf.
[75] Vincent A, Smith. "Chapter 4 – Alexander's Indian Campaign – The Retreat." *The Public's Library and Digital Archive*, www.ibiblio.org/britishraj/Jackson2/chapter04.html. Pp.81-82.

Colour and Symbolism of Heroes and Ancestor deity Worship

The usage of red and orange as symbols of bravery and sacrifice goes beyond the battlefield to cultural and religious traditions. In Indian culture, colours, particularly red, have strong associations of courage, vigour, and sacredness. It is also a colour associated with Shakti, the divine feminine energy, emphasising the sacredness of the warrior's duty to protect not just their land but also the dignity and honour of their women and children. The rituals of Jauhar however terrible, symbolise the pinnacle of defiance and courage. These rites were more than just acts of self-sacrifice; they gave deep cultural meanings, emphasising that submission to an enemy was worse than death. The red robes, vermillion, and ceremonial fire were visual symbols of the warrior's tenacity and the community's solidarity in the face of annihilation.

Chapter V

Colour and Symbolism of Magical, Otherworldly and Animal Deity

Most ancient civilisations' belief systems include symbolic depictions of the supernatural, the otherworld, and animals. Throughout history, humans have used symbols and figurative language to represent animals and wild creatures to absorb and conquer their magical power. In ancient times, picturing wild beasts and animals provided humans with a psychological perception of overcoming the untamed beast. These artistic manifestations provide a narrative aspect to rituals, as community members attempt to imbue their creative endeavours with the spirit of the terrifying beast.

Similarly, Theyyam depicts the mystical, unearthly, and animal realms, as well as elaborately symbolic portrayals of flora and wildlife, which is a popular and intriguing element. These components generally appear in detailed symbolic symbols, establishing Theyyam as a timeless entity. This imaginative representation infuses Theyyam with nostalgia and nativity, seamlessly connecting the worlds of mysticism and philosophy. In some Theyyam, the entire apparition is a combination of magical, otherworldly, and animal deities, all of which are thought to have arisen from old nature worship practices.

Even though these Theyyam origin legends are now blurry and impacted by other small and massive cultures and beliefs, such as Shaivite and Vaishnavite, Theyyam still preserves nature worship patterns through its symbolic and iconographic attributes. The study of these Theyyam categories provides an understanding of the aesthetics that were constructed in ancient times and their evolution. The animal

categories of Theyyam are designed uniquely to perform and mimic the appearance of the particular animal that is deified. These appearances are achieved by the symbolic and iconographic drawings of the animal.

5.1 Legends of animal deity and symbolism on attire

Mukathezhuthu of the Theyyam is an integral symbolic procedure in the process of deification. The Theyyam specialist and artist draw the Theyyam visage utilising instructions passed down from ancestors to the current generation. Each design and pattern reflect the deity's or goddess' essence and personality. Thus, each structural and visual element strengthens the performer's senses, empowering them to become a god or goddess. Some deities in the Theyyam performance represent the entities and characters of animals from the natural world. Some of the main animal deities of the Theyyam pantheon as follows.

5.1.2 Mudhala Theyyam

Mudhala Theyyam is performed solely at the extremely rare *kaavu* (sacred groves) in north Kerala's Kannur district. During the ceremonial performance, the performer crawls on the ground like a crocodile while carrying out the Theyyam. Unlike other Theyyams, Muthala Theyyam does not utter any words or hymns while performing and instead behaves as a pure creature that can never talk. Mostly performed by Maavilan community members and regarded as one of the most furious forms in their Theyyam pantheon. The *thottam* (invocation song before Theyyam's performance), or myth, of Theyyam is enacted in the presence of *ilathaalam* (musical instrument similar to small pairs of cymbals). The Theyyam is performed to protect and prevent reptiles and other crawling critters from harming community members or individuals.

Mudhala Theyyam's *mudi* (headgear) is known as *chennimalar*, and it is adorned with areca nut sheaths cut in an oval shape and detailed with images of reptiles and other animals such as snakes, tortoises, crocodiles, lizards, scorpions, and centipedes on top (see Figure 5.1 given below)

Figure 5.1: Upper portion of *mudi* (headgear) of Mudhala Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

In addition to *thalappali*, the Theyyam form includes *thalathanda, olakathu, chethi poov*, and *tholvala*. The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawings) of the Theyyam is classified as *vattakannu* meaning round eye. *Kuruthola* (Coconut palm leaves) are tied together from front to back on the body of the Theyyam; this, alongside other symbolic elements, has a functional purpose. It is used to assist the Theyyam in crawling more comfortably. During the performance, Mudhala Theyyam's mudi resembles a land mass or an object that does not sink into the water body. It resembles a ground or land mass that shelters and protects living things from floods and currents. The legend of the Mudhala Theyyam tells a similar story.

The narrative takes place during the flood that happened near the Thiruprangathamma Temple. At the time, regular rites such as lamp lighting at the temple were delayed or postponed because the priest who performs it on a regular basis became caught on the opposite side of the flooded river and was unable to enter the temple. It is said that the Thiruprangathamma, disguised as a crocodile, arrived to assist the priest by transporting him across the flooded river on its back. The peasant who observed this is taken aback by the mythical incident and commemorates it by giving the goddesses the Theyyam form to accept blessings. The Theyyam bestows blessings on devotees by extending its neck, creeping, and circumnavigating the temple grounds.

5.1.3 Pulli Karimkali and Pulikandan Theyyam

According to Theyyam's mythology, Puli Karin Kali and Pulikandan are the terrifying tiger avatars of Parvathi and Param Siva. While travelling through the Thuloor *vanam* (Thuloor forest), they witnessed two tigers copulating. The visual awakens their desire, so they transform into a tiger and a tigress, Puli Karimkali and Pulikandan, and give birth to five male tiger kittens named Puliyoor Kannan, Puli Maaruthan, Kandam Puli, Mara Puli, and Kala Puli. However, Puli Karinkali became disappointed when all of her offspring were born as male descendants, so she requested Lakshmi Devi for a girl child. Upon hearing this wish, Lakshmi Devi transformed into a female infant in Karin Kali's womb. The little girl who appears as a tigress is known as Puliyoor Kali.

While Puli Karimkali was completely pregnant, she got extremely hungry and exhausted; therefore, her five male tiger children went in quest of cattle. They smash landlord Kurumbranthiri Vazhunnavar's livestock shed, slaughter cattle, and bring the meat to Puli Karimkali. Kurumbranthiri, enraged, orders Karinthiri Nair to kill the tigers in retaliation for his defeat. However, when Karinthiri Nair travels to Thuloor Vanam, he comes under attack and is slaughtered by the tigers.

The narrative suggests a myth based on Shaivite beliefs and divine characteristics. However, most instances of the Theyyam form introduce this

meaning later, thereby elaborating on the earlier narrative. The symbolic aspects, such as the *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) and other embellishments, represent the tiger's qualities on the human body (see Figure 5.2 given below).

Figure 5.2: *Mukathezhuthu* of Puli Karimkali Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

These characteristics might be components of the initial story that became blended with Shaivite myths and stories. It's also plausible that they're portraying real humans who disguised themselves as tigers to avoid authorities or escape oppression. Furthermore, these tigers may have been individuals who were identified as criminals by authorities and were forced to hide in forests so as to avoid getting killed. The Kurumbranthiri Vazhunnavar and Karinthiri Nair may be actual characters, serving as authority figures who are looking for them and seeking vengeance. It's also likely that these persecuted groups of people, hiding in the forests, murdered the cow and took its flesh to their secret villages while posing as tigers. Rich, privileged landowning communities, such as Kurumbranthiri, owned numerous cows as a symbol of prosperity. Stealing from him represents resistance and revolution against the authoritarian ruling caste's hypocrisy. Karinthiri Nair appears as a cow vigilante or herd guard. So, he

determined to get retribution on those hidden behind woodlands. However, individuals who know how to disguise themselves as tigers and hide in the forest are highly familiar with the area; therefore, Karinthiri Nair was unsuccessful in ambushing the tigers and was slain.

Figure 5.3: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Pulikandan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

Above, Figure 5.3 shows the mukathezhuthu of Pulikandan Theyyam with intricate details of tiger features. In accordance with established customs, the Theyyam representing the eight deities, which includes Shiva and Parvati's tiger avatars as well as their children's, is symbolically worshipped. According to tradition, the Theyyams of these eight deities, which include Shiva and Parvati's tiger forms as well as their progeny, are symbolically worshipped. These deities' outfits are constructed to evoke metaphorical portrayals of tigers with superficial appearances. The geometrical forms of these Theyyam are extremely intimidating, with surrealistic qualities as well as complicated signs and symbols that represent the tiger's character and nature, according to the tale.

5.1.4 Puliyoor Kannan

The *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) in this Theyyam is known as the *narikurichezhuthu*. Nari in Malayalam means tiger, and this sort of *mukathezhuthu* is the primary symbol for tiger deities. Similarly to the story, the *mukathezhuthu* depicts a terrifying tiger's face and body. Aside from the *mukathezhuthu*, the Puliyoor Kannan's *marchamayam* (bodily attire) displays his animality as a tiger: the *marchamayam* is embellished with fluffy cotton and a tail, reminiscent of the real tiger from the folklore.

5.1.5 Puliyoor Kali

Puliyoor Kali has been believed to be the Parvati Param Shiva couple's single tigress cub, or daughter child. Puliyoor Kali, like other tiger deities, is a fearsome god whose entire outfit has a tiger symbol. The Theyyam wears a *vatta mudi*, which enhances its ferocious appearance and movement during performance. The Figure 5.4 given below is the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Puliyoor Kali; the main iconography in this *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) is the tiger’s symbolic drawing. It is symmetrically aligned on both sides of the cheeks of Theyyam along with the icons of native flowers. With this tiger drawing, *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) is giving suggestions to the narrative of the deities. With these illustrations, it is evident that the artist and Theyyam expert is attempting to convey the deity's persona as a tiger symbolically, rather than actually presenting the tiger's traits. It might also be argued that these symbolic paintings give tigers strength and character on the performer's body, as opposed to creating a tiger effigy.

Figure 5.4: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Puliyoor Kali with two symmetrical tiger drawings on the cheek, drawn by the researcher.

5.1.6 Kadam Puli

Kadam Puli's makeover and adornment have similarities to those of other tiger deities, and *mukathezhuthu* is classified as *narikurichezhuth*. The *marchamayam* (body clothing) is likewise made of fluffy cotton, but in some versions of the Kadam Puli performance, the body is covered with symbolic dots and line writing that resembles a tiger.

5.1.7 Puli Maaruthan

In the instance of Puli Maaruthan, *mukathezhuthu* is identical to Puliyoor Kannan and Kadam Puli; it is called *narikurichezhuthu*. Its marchamayam differs from the other two. Its name is *manja theppu, chuvappu vara*, which translates as yellow dabbing and red lines.

5.1.8 Kala Puli

Kala Puli Theyyam also features a similar *mukathezhuthu* to the previous Theyyam, the *narikurichezhuthu*, which resembles a tiger. The body is then embellished with *manayolathodu*.

5.1.9 Panchuruli Theyyam

Panchuruli Theyyam is thought to be a manifestation of avatar Varahi (the boar avatar). According to legend, the hunter Ammina Mavilan saw Panchuruli while hunting in Karnataka's Kodagu highlands. The influence of Tulu regions 'Bootha Kolam' is clearly prevalent in this Theyyam through the narrative and by the name of the Theyyam. Panchi translates to "boar" in Tulu. According to others, the name Panchiuru Kali evolved into Panchuruli later in the course of time. The Theyyam story is also associated with the Shaivite myth; it is believed that Panchuruli is one of the seven goddesses generated together with Maha Kali from the holy fire pit created by Lord Shiva to destroy the Shumbhasuran and Nishumbhasuran. In another variation of the story, Panchuruli was born to slay evil Panchaveeran and sow happiness on earth in the form of a boar.

Mukathezhuthu of Panchurli Theyyam is known as *rudra minukku*, which means furious dabbing of hue. It is dabbed or drew towards the deity's violent aspect. Aside from the *mukathezhuthu*, Panjuruli wears a mask depicting Varaha, the boar avatar. The mask is mostly composed of bronze, with meticulous workmanship and perfection. The mask is regarded as a deity's idol and is carried throughout all ceremonies. Panchuruli possesses both a malicious and benign nature. Panchuruli exhibits benevolence at the start of the performance but subsequently evolves into a malevolent, ferocious form. As a goddess in the guise of Varaha, she wears a breastplate that extends to her abdomen. In general, this *aniyalam* (embellishments) of Theyyam is built with a variety of materials like wood, steel, brass, and so on to symbolise the Shaivite relationship and the Kali's character. The Theyyam comes with a wooden snake waistband.

However, the actual story of Theyyam is shrouded and almost forgotten. The Shaivite legends and myths take precedence over the original narrative, or basic story, of the Theyyam. The original plot is based on the local sociocultural structure and identity. As a result of incorporating the previously archetypal institution of Shaivism into Theyyam, the original notion of Theyyam as a religion is fading.

Other myths about animal deities include an impersonation method known as *odi vidhya* (impersonating magic skill), in which individuals transform into animals through body makeover and magic. Puli Maranja Thondachan Theyyam's narrative is an example of a knowledgeable warrior impersonating himself to a Tiger.

5.1.10 Puli Maranja Thondachan

Puli Maranja Thondachan, also known as Kari Gurukkal Theyyam, is one of the Pulaya people's most revered deities. According to the myth, the Kari Gurukkal transformed into a *puli* (tiger) while being manipulated by the king's command to provide tiger skin, milk, and teeth.

Kari was born to a Pulaya couple, Maniyan Kanjaan and Vallikudichivirundi, who work on the farmland of the landowner, Kunjambu Nambiar. Kari was an exceptional young man with a passion for knowledge and expertise. In these unpleasant times, when the authorities forbade knowledge for the working-class communities, Kari refused to lose hope. He tries to learn reading and writing abilities by concealing and listening to Chembidar Gurukkal's lessons while he was instructing upper-class pupils. When Kari informed his father about his desire to practice martial arts, he warned him for even thinking about it. Kunjambu Nambiar, the landlord, came to hear about the situation and felt empathy for Kari's ambition to study.

Kunjambu Nambiar facilitates Kari in joining Kalari (a martial arts institution) by providing Kari his name and address, Kunjimankalam Parathaattu Kunjambu. Kari, disguised as Kunjambu, enrolled in the Madayi Kalari and acquired martial arts techniques. In the pursuit of further martial arts

expertise, he joined other Kalari and explored skills from eighteen of them. Aside from that, he acquired the ultimate and most essential talent from his mentor Karukathi at Chothiyaar Kalari. It is the most renowned *odi vidhya* (impersonating magic skill) which allows him to disguise and conceal himself as other people and animals.

After Kari finished his training, his guru, Karukathi Amma, asked him to reside with her at Chothiyaar Kalari. But Kari refuses to listen to her and instead wants to start afresh. Thus, upset, Karikathi cursed him, claiming that whatever knowledge he gained would lead to his own demise. But the curse did not affect Kari's mentality; he left Chodiyaar Kalari and became the Madayi Kavu Gurukal (master). Pure talent and insight propelled him to this position, and no one can compete with him as a martial artist with extensive knowledge and mastery. However, Kari's position as a Pulaya of inferior birth, barred from schooling and martial practice, grew to tremendous heights, causing jealousy among others and higher officials. Despite the fact that Kari obtained his post using a fake name and identity, higher authorities were unable to stop him due to his extensive education and combat talents.

As a result, the higher authorities implement an elaborate scheme to ensnare Kari Gurukkal, capturing him in such a way that he never returns to his post again. When Allada Thamburan grew insane and felt unwell, they resorted to the intelligent Kari Gurukkal for a cure, promising a part of the kingdom in exchange. Kunjambu Nambiar, Kari's mentor and supporter, sensed the ambush and urged him not to accept the offer. Nonetheless, Kari accepted the challenge, determined to face it. With his apprentices at his side, he headed off for Allada Thamburan's palace, ready to heal his illness and recover his sanity.

Kari aquired the impersonation art, known as *odi vidhya* (impersonating magic skill), under the supervision of Karikathi at Chodiyaar Kalari. Employing this technique, he disguises himself as a tiger in order to deliver tiger skin and milk. He requested his wife to beat him with a broom rinsed in rice water while returning back from the forest in order to return to his normal shape; otherwise,

he would never be able to do so. With firm determination, Kari agreed to the commitment and set out for the forest of Aaraanmala to fulfil the mission. While returning after obtaining tiger skin and milk, he first stopped at the palace to present the offering to King Allada Thamburan, but the palace doors closed in front of him. When Kari Gurukkal finds out about the treachery, he rushes to meet his wife in order to return to his real human form. Unfortunately, his wife Vellachi exhibits fear and closes the door. When Kari senses treachery from his loving wife, it is devastating for him, and she is his only hope to return to human form. Anguished, Kari breaks into the home through the ceiling, slits her throat, and murders her instantaneously. Tormented, Kari roars, retreats to the jungle, and enters the realm of tigers.

Following that, abnormal incidences began to occur throughout the realm. Every night, with the fall of darkness, the palace walls struck with the terrifying roars of tigers, startling the ladies and queens out of their sleep. Sleepless nights became the norm, and members were concerned about the situation. In response, the astrologer was summoned to the Palace. He supervised the building of a shrine for Kari Gurukkal and the establishment of a Theyyam committed to the Pulimaranja Thondachan. Following this advice, the king visits Kari's mentor, Chenicheri Kunjambu Nambiar, with an offering of the monarch's land and wealth. With all of the arrangements in place, the performance of Pulimaranja Thondachan begins.

The narrative of Pulimaranja Thondachan exemplifies the authoritarian constraint on the wisdom of the underprivileged people. Kari Gurukkal embodies the emancipation of underprivileged populations from the authoritarian tyranny of affluent individuals. He strove throughout his life to achieve something that his inheritance in society would never permit him to achieve. His enthusiastic nature enables him to reap the benefits of knowledge and talent. For him and his community, wisdom and talent are forbidden fruit, which is both sweet and poisonous. The Kari Gurukkal's fame and immense success spurred others' jealousy of him, turning his life into a tragedy.

The Theyyam's costume is primarily heroic in its structure, with significant inspiration from Kathivanur Veeran. The similarities between Kari Gurukkal and Kathivanur Veeran's dress emanate mostly from their professions and passions. They are both martial arts professionals and proficient warriors (see Figure 5. 5 given below).

Figure 5.5: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Pulimaranja Thondachan, drawn by the researcher.

4.2 Snake deities

The snake-worshipping tradition is considered to have originated with these revered deities, whose primary symbolism was snake images and metaphorical serpents. The most prominent snake deities are Nagakanni, Nagarajan, Naga Bhagavathy, Nagathaan, Naga Kandan, Nagathil Daivam, Naga Kaaman, and Naga Kali. Sacred performances for these deities have traditionally taken place in renowned snake grooves such as Edaattu Nagam, Kayyath Nagam, Karippal Nagam, Muyyath Nagam, and Erumbaala Nagam. Theyyam ceremonies are claimed to bestow blessings on future generations as well as cure and eradicate ailments. The snake symbolism and iconography are

prominent in these Theyyams' adornments and attire. Most Theyyams feature snake figures, sculptures, and adornments, with the mudi being the primary source of these elements.

5.2.1 Nagakanni

According to devotees, this deity is invoked to ensure the good fortune of progeny. The deity's genesis is described symbolically as follows:

"Paal kadalile mani nagaputtil piranna Naga devatha"

This signifies that the Naga devata originated from the snake pearl shell and is encircled by a milk-filled ocean. The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) attributed to this Theyyam is referred to as *nagakuri*, which translates as snake Bindi. *Nagakuri* is a less complex form of *mukathezhuthu* prepared by dabbing the primary layer with water-based vermillion red and then painstakingly painting patterns with oil-based red.

5.2.2 Nagarajan

Nagarajan is a male snake god who thrived in the snake worship tradition. According to legend, the deity emerged in the shape of a snake before the elderly members of the *tharavaadu* (ancestral house). So, adhering to this, the elders offer space to the snake deity and organise Theyyam once a year to appease them and receive their blessings. It is thought that Nagarajan is carried out mostly for the blessing of bearing better offspring; however, it also assists with pregnancy-related concerns and the prevention of skin illnesses. In rare situations, it is thought that its blessing protects against toxic snake contact.

Nagarajan's headgear, also known as *nagamudi,* (snake headwear) is embellished by adjoining several pieces portraying serpent imagery. The primary distinguishing feature of this Theyyam is its *mekhezhuthu* (bodily paintings), which showcase an image of two entangled snakes, representing snake copulation. This sophisticated work of art represents the virile essence and encapsulates the deity's power in aiding fertility and the consummation of

children. *Mukathezhuthu* of Nagarajan has similarities with Thekkan Kriyathan; it gives the Theyyam a virile nature (see Figure 5.6 given below).

Figure 5.6: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Nagarajan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

5.2.3 Naga Bhagavathy

The most distinguishing feature of the Naga Bhagavathi is its mudi; being a feminine goddess, the deity bears a massive *thirumudi* (venerated headgear) constructed of *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) and bamboo strips. The headpiece resembles the shape of *valiya mudi* (large headgear), which is primarily worn by the feminine goddess' form. In another instance, the Theyyam will be ornamented with a *mudi* that is lower in size than the *valiya mudi*, but it will be embellished with a miniature serpent design. Naga Bhagavathy carried out precautions to avoid contact with deadly reptiles and snakes, to prevent skin diseases, and to have healthy offspring.

5.2.4 Naga Kali

Naga Kali Theyyam is performed as well with the intention of producing a child for a childless couple; hence, it is regarded as the fertility mother goddess. To appease the deity, request the worshippers to deliver the *pulluvan paatu* (song was offered to appease serpent deities) in front of the *stanam* (shrine) during the performance. *Mukathezhuthu* of Naga Kali is distinguished by two serpent heads above the eyes to show its snake features (see Figure 5.7 down below).

Figure 5.7: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Naga Kali Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

5.3 Pottan Theyyam

Pottan Theyyam is a distinctive deity in the Theyyam pantheon, as well as the significant Theyyam cultural identity of Pulaya's downtrodden caste. Pottan Theyyam's story is terrible; it occurred during a period in Kerala when caste tyranny was rampant. The plot revolves around Alankaran, an insightful and intelligent guy born into a Pulaya community amid the Dark Ages. He was

born into a culture that considers itself tainted by its uncivilised and unappealing caste structure. The story tells that, once, Alankaran happened to cross paths with an upper-caste Brahmin who was also walking. The upper-caste Brahmin notices him and orders him to make way for himself. But Alankaran, who was critical of the higher authorities, was not willing to back down; instead, he claimed that this was an unjust circumstance for him. Pulaya men's arguments, according to upper caste officials, were rebellious and violated the hierarchical framework of society that they had constructed for their own personal gain. So, they mercilessly murdered Alankaran by tossing him into the flames. Alankaran, with all of his wisdom and intelligence, is said to have been a strong soul who laughed till death in the consuming fire. As a result, even today, during the Pottan Theyyam performance, the deity laughs while flinging himself into the flames.

In later times, this same narrative passed through various changes and transformed into different variations of the story; one of them is as follows: once, when the Shankaracharya begins his journey to achieving the *sarvaknja peedam* (the summit of wisdom), the Pulaya man crosses his path. Shankaracharya's ignorance prevents him from proceeding, and he deems this a terrible portent, ordering the Pulaya man to leave the path. This caused the Pulaya man to confront him, pose some serious questions, and expose the saint's misunderstanding of human unity. The Pulaya man teaches him important lessons about caste-based stereotypes and bodily cleanliness. The challenging issue he addressed was why, despite the fact that the blood flowing through their veins is the same hue, such inequality persists.

"Naangale kothyaalum onalle chora"

"Ningale kothyaalum onalle chora"

The narrative is groundbreaking and continues to be relevant globally as well. It's remarkable that a story in old Theyyam forms was staged several decades ago with progressive sociopolitical implications. The story talks about the essence of self-consciousness and universal peace through one's own

existence. Shankaracharya was astonished by the modest Pulaya's speech on universally significant philosophy.

In another version of the narrative, the Shaivite influence caused a change in the characters. According to that story's narrative, Siva Parvathi tests the intellect of the great Shankaracharya on his path to the *sarvaknja peedam* (the summit of wisdom). Siva Parvathi disguises themself as a *chandala* (hunter) couple and approaches him on the way to *sarvaknja peedam* (the summit of wisdom), where they assess his wisdom on humanity. Shankaracharya observes them as an untouchable family and orders them to leave his path since he considers their presence to be polluting it. The *chandala* (hunter) family, however, defies this demand and initiates a major debate with Shankaracharya. The old *thottam* (Ritualistic oral narrative song of Theyyam) of the Pottan Theyyam provides a glimpse of this extended dialogue and discourse:

Akkarayundoru thonikadappaan
Aalumaniyaaykadakkum Kadavu
Ikkaravannittanayumaa thoni
Appozhe koodekadakkayum venam
Thakkamarinju kadannu kondaal
Thane kadakkam kadavukalellam
Aarum kadanittakkare chennaal
Aanandhamullone kaanan polanne….

Naan thanna thoni kadanille neengal

Thonikkakathu neer kandille chovvaru?

Naan thanna thenga udachille neengal

Thengakakthu neer kandille chovvaru?

Naangal kuppayil nattoru vaazha
Pazhamalle neengale thevanu pooja

Naangal kuppayil nattoru thrithaa-
Poovallo neengade thevanu maala

Pookondu maala thodukkuallo nungalu

Paalkondu maala thodukkuallo naangal

Chandanam chaarthi nadakkuallo nungal

Cherumaninju nadakkumee naangal

Veerali chutti nadakkuallo nungal

Manchatti chutti nadakkume naangal

Vaalum palisayum edukkualle nungal

Maadiyum kathiyum edukkume naang

Pookkuda choodi nadakkualle nungal

Poothali choodi nadakualle naangal

Aana puram keri ningal varumbo

Pothin puram keri naangal varume!!

Neengale kothyaalum choralle chovvaru?

Naangale kothyaalum choralle chovvaru?

Pinnenthe chovarru kulam pisakunnu

Theendikondalle kulam pisakunnu!

Ellallakoyil kulam pisakoolam

Mappila koyil kulam pisak endu!

Periyoondre koyikkalallorum chennal

Avidekk neegalum naangalum okku.

Neengal palarkoodi naadu pazhukkum

Naangal palarkoodi thodu pazhukkum

Neengal palarkoodi moloothu Pombo

"Neegalum naagalum okkum!

The Theyyam's *thottam* (Ritualistic oral narrative song of Theyyam) features an engaging rendition of *chandala's* (hunter) argument. He claims that if everyone is born equal, then why do unprivileged individuals still face discrimination? He further questions that if there were no distinction among individuals, why would barriers exist? He also wonders how a learnt saint like him, who is on the verge of reaching the pinnacle of knowledge, could see them differently and ask them to leave his way. *chandala* (hunter) also questions why you are measuring us based on our impoverished exterior appearance, which causes you to speak in a way that is disrespectful. Despite your extensive knowledge regarding everything, your ego drives you to speak to us in such a manner. We are all equal before God and knowledge; there is no distinction between privileged and poor. You take a boat, and we paddle in the same water. If you crack the coconut we offer you, you are going to get the same water out of it. You do *pooja* (sacred propitiation for deity) with our banana and the flowers we planted in our backyard mud; then, why aren't we permitted to enter the temple? Why does inequality exist when we are all created of the same flesh and blood? Our body serves as a temporary home that we must depart whenever God wants us to leave, at the point where we all become equal. Even if you have knowledge about all this, then why are you being a hypocrite in front of us? *chandala* (hunter) argues.

According to the narrative, this questioning of *chandala* (hunter) awestruck the Shankaracharya, and he realised his faults in his thinking process and the importance of criticism. Hearing the wide knowledge from *chandala* (hunter) made Shankaracharya realise that he is not a normal human being, but the Lord Shiva himself came to assess his wisdom. Thus, he accepts his

wrongdoing and ignorance by bowing down in front of *chandala* (hunter) and seeking forgiveness.

The Thottam of the Pottan Theyyam also reflects the cultural dynamics of the time, stressing the huge inequality in the lifestyles of different castes. *Chandala's* explanation powerfully shows the struggles of the underprivileged individuals, whose effort supports the whole community, even the rich upper caste. He describes how constant daily toil covers the unprivileged in dirt, while luxury and sandal paste adorn the rich. The disparities continue; while the privileged ones wear heroic clothes and carry shields, the underprivileged wear mud pots on top of their heads as they work. Even their mode of commute differs; the buffalo is for the unprivileged, and the elephant for the privileged. Why this much distinction between human beings?

The *thottam* (Ritualistic oral narrative song of Theyyam) vividly describes the evident division of the landscape between the privileged and the unprivileged. *Chandala* (hunter) says that while we, the oppressed community, dwell in the waterways, the upper castes occupy the landmass. Yet he makes us remember the unavoidable truth: while we die, all returns to the sky; there is no difference in that. Finally, he further highlights the universal truth about the human race, asserting that when we are cut, our blood flows the same "red." This *thottam* (Ritualistic oral narrative song of Theyyam) explicitly criticises the affluent caste's hypocrisy in creating inequity and hierarchy over the underprivileged.

Overall, Pottam Theyyam's tale and *thottam* (Ritualistic oral narrative song of Theyyam) reflect the political and cultural demographics of north Kerala. However, the story's thematic relevance extends beyond north Kerala; it is universally applicable and socially inevitable in the present day. The narrative discusses the dire economic situation of subaltern groups, whose identities are disregarded in the social scene. The narrative told here is revolutionary because criticising an upper-caste wealthy person is

inconceivable to a lower-caste person and invites death for them. However, the narrative portrays Lord Shiva as the identity marker of the whole unprivileged caste and criticises the social structure while performing Theyyam.

In a manner similar to the narrative, The Pottan Theyyam's attire creates a feeling of sorrow and deep anguish, reflecting the injustice of discriminatory socioeconomic structures. The costume is unique, with the performer wearing a mask, which carries dual symbolic meanings. Firstly, it reflects the disguised character of Lord Shiva as *chandala* (hunter). Secondly, it represents the identity of the faceless, downtrodden, insignificant communities worldwide. The mask is designed in an expressive style, depicting Alankaran's face, as a symbol of the burden and misery imposed by the oppressive caste system. As a result, it vividly portrays the existential crises that unprivileged caste identities experienced, marked by despair and alienation. These communities were often forced to deny themselves the pleasures of life in order to better the lives of the privileged classes.

Their lives are consumed by a daily cycle of hard work and unending difficulties, with no hope of achieving essence or purpose. For them, reliance on God is an unimaginable privilege since God is distant and unreachable, hindered by societal hierarchy. Anxiety and pessimism govern their lives, demonstrated by the Pottan Theyyam's expressive mask. This mask is a portrayal of the difficult historical era. The anguished expression on the mask portrays the inner turmoil of an unprivileged community, cut off from a life of essence with purpose and meaning and decreased into pain and desolation. Their desire to reclaim a meaningful existence is frequently overshadowed by the looming possibility of death. The mask is profoundly created with the fear of being an existence without contents, and its expression symbolises an identity established through struggle and suffering. Even today, Pottan Theyyam's mask continues to establish itself as a significant symbol for the unprivileged individual's struggle of existence.

The face painted over the mask is unique in the Theyyam pantheon; it appears to exclusively represent the anguished mood. The human face is disfigured and anguished, indicating an unconscious fear of meaningless life. The curvilinear lines distort and transcend the human face, giving the impression that the face's personal identity has been gone. The lines made the face too melting to become a visage of misery and pain from a pointless existence. The Pottan Theyyam *mukappala* (face mask) captured a clear picture of Alankaran's inner pain at that point in time. The thickened brow generates an expressive facial feature that quietly criticises the unfair socioeconomic structure. The *mukappala* (face mask) also has a widened long tooth, which represents anger caused by buried anguish, (see Figure 5.8 given below).

Figure 5.8: Pottan Theyyam performs with all of its ornamentation.

Colour and Symbolism of Magical, Otherworldly and Animal Deity

The drawings above the *mukappala* (face mask) symbolically highlight the same concerns raised by Alankaran about the unequal socioeconomic order. The question of social structure is not to annihilate it but rather to create a balanced structure that is inclusive of all and that leads to equality. As a result, the facial mask and overall Theyyam costume prepare the performer for the exalted stages of the ritual, highlighting the transition from the physical human body to a ceremonial state. In this state, the performers' bodies become the vehicle for the soul of Alankaran or the deity's power. In the minds of the viewers, the extravagant ceremonial expose symbolically raises the same concern about the ambiguities regarding universal equality, replicating the theme reflected in the drawings of the *mukappala* (face mask). Artists, professionals, and performers all experience Alankaran emotions while they create and perform Pottan Theyyam artwork (see 5.9 Figure given below).

Figure 5.9: *Mukappala* (face mask) of Pottan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

The experience appears to be marked by profound ambiguity regarding the existence of life in the absence of its essential core. This experience creates a mindset capable of expressing sadness through art. Pottan Theyyam's whole body of work is on releasing emotions from terrible situations in the past. By constructing and enacting a metaphorical image of Alankaran's sensation through the human body, the community metaphorically expresses their suppressed dreadful emotion.

To complete the expressive attire, the Pottan Theyyam's head is adorned with *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds). It conveys emotion beyond the face and

behind the head, and the vivid, massive headpiece enhances the three-dimensional image. The extension of this *mudi* (headgear) is also made of *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds), which resemble long hair and cover the backside of the Theyyam; it is known as *'thalayolla.*' The Theyyam's outfit, like the mudi (headgear), is composed of *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) and covers the waist to the leg. It is called *'arayolla*.' Apart from these two, there is an extra embellishment, which is made out of the same *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds), which is known as '*koyyola*.' For *koyyola*, *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) are made as fine threads and worn as a bangle. Here the Theyyam costume is wholly made out of *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds), which symbolise the humble life of *chandala* (hunter) and his unprivileged circumstances that made him wear just *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) apart from the cotton cloths. This depiction of Theyyam shows the hierarchical structure that prevails in the time period over the costume. The lower caste community's unprivileged status forbids them from wearing many clothes made out of cotton, which was a luxury in the time period.

During the performance, this traditional costume enables the Theyyam performer to leap into the flames without risking burns. Theyyam also carries a pole with the end coated in *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) and a billhook. This outfit depicts the underprivileged populations' livelihood, which is arduous cultivation of higher caste grounds. During the act, Theyyam rushes into the fire, and the other Theyyam expert pulls him out. When the Theyyam enters or leaps into fire, it transforms into an ethereal being with superhuman abilities. Each time the artist jumps into the flames, he deifies himself in front of the audience. The Pottan Theyyam's plunge into the flame represents the lower caste's questioning and disagreement with the higher power structure. Because challenging higher authorities has terrible consequences, Alankaran rebelled by arguing with them and perished in a raging fire. Thus, the leaping of the Theyyam in the fire represents the brave Alankaran's thought while questioning the higher power structure. The pyre in this case represents the metaphysical

entity that permits the performer to reach symbolically into the space of metaphysics in order to achieve deification and return to the ordinary world (see Figure 5.10 given below).

Figure 5.10: Pottan Theyyam performing the fire leaping ritual.

Theyyam's message proposes that knowledge can bring up revolutionary social change for racial equality. *Thottam* (invocation song before Theyyam's performance) discusses two types of knowledge: Shankaracharya's knowledge, which is gained via extensive study of literature and discussions among academics and instructors. The other is Alankaran's wisdom, which is the result of hard life struggles and experiences. Theyyam powerfully symbolises the knowledge people gain through life struggles without the luxury of privileged communities.

Figure 5.11: Pottan Theyyam with all its embellishment.

It is neither a deity nor a person; rather, it is an identity of knowledge that emerges from the life experiences of any individual seeking truth. Theyyam's cultural perspective extends across three dimensions of art form: literature, art, and performance. These three layers of cultural awareness communicate in the same way, and it is a perfect amalgamation of the real

artistic form that is far more progressive than its time. The Theyyam's revolutionary demand is for the emancipation of lower-caste untouchables through education and wisdom.

5.4 Pula Maaruthan

Pula Maaruthan is a companion deity of Pottan Theyyam, also known as Polaran Theyyam. Polaran, as Nandikesan, accompanied Shiva and Parvathy as they confronted the great Shankaracharya on the path to the *sarvaknja peedam* (pinnacle of wisdom). Polaran Theyyam's attire is similar to the Pottan Theyyam's, but with a slightly altered *mukappala* (face mask). Polaran's *mukappala* (face mask) is furthermore embellished with a crimson ribbon that forms a flowery motif on the jawline. Theyyam's *mukappala* (face mask) is not as expressive or furious as Pottam's, but it does convey a feeling of dread through its facial characteristics. Because the Theyyam portrays the *chandala* (hunter) couple's child. The *mukappala* (face mask) reflects the *chandala* (hunter) family’s fear of existence, merged with a child's innocence (see Figure 5.12down below).

Figure 5.12: *Mukappala* (face mask) of Pulamaaruthan Theyyam.

The Pulamaaruthan Theyyam *mudi* (headgear) is comparable to the Pottan Theyyam in that it forms a convoluted circle behind the head, providing it a three-dimensional expressive appearance.

5.5 Gulikan Theyyam

Gulikan, also known as the trickster Theyyam, presently has a storyline that is deeply rooted in Shaivite mythology and legends. As per the story, Gulikan was created from Shiva's left toe to fill the void left by Kala Bhairava, who used to claim the lives of living creatures at the halt of their time on Earth. In a moment of fury, Shiva burns and kills Kala Bhairav to save his beloved devotee, Markandeya. However, with the absence of Kala Bhairva, death ceased

to exist; living beings continued to multiply unchecked, imposing an immense burden on Mother Earth. Saturated by an ever-growing population, she and the other devas brought their grievance before Shiva, seeking a solution to the problem. Thus, Shiva creates Gulikan, assigns him a mission, and entrusts him with the responsibility of the living being's lifespan. It is thought that Gulikan would be there in each living being's existence from birth to death, in every moment, good or terrible, major or trivial. Gulikan, the deity of death, is thought to live mostly in smoke, ashes, and coal. Believers pray to Gulikan Theyyam to fend off numerous incurable diseases, overcome foes, and win the fight. There are eight distinct forms of Gulikan Theyyams, which are performed in various *kaavu* (sacred groves). Some of the most prominent Gulikan Theyyams include Karim Gulikan, Marana Gulikan, Vadkkan Gulikan, Thekkan Gulikan, Kara Gulikan, Uchara Gulikan, Sevakkara Gulikan, and Unmatha Gulikan.

Gulikan Theyyam performs at midnight in the *kaqvu* (sacred grooves). Gulikan wears an enormous *mudi* (headgear) crafted from *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds) and strides on a raised *poykaalu* (pseudo leg). Like Pottan Theyyam, Gulikan also dons a *mukappala* (face mask), which varies depending on the type of Gulikan deity or the location where they are represented. Some of the Gulikan wear intricate metallic *mukappala* (face masks), while others are constructed of transient materials such as areca sheath or wood panels. Its *mekhezhuthu* (body makeup) is known as *mashithrishoolam*; the term appears to refer to two words: *mashi* (ink for drawing, which can be kohl) and *thrishoolam* (trident). Thus, the combination of nouns in the name symbolises a trident drawn with kohl or ink. The drawing is done by dabbing rice powder over the torso to give it a white tint, and then a black line with kohl is painted on the two sides of the abdomen and hands. The artwork, which figuratively represents the trident body, clearly demonstrates that Gulikan Theyyam sprang from Lord Shiva's body.

Dabbing rice flour over the face comes first, followed by the application of black eyeliner expanding from the top of the brow to under the eyes. The

outfits and accessories, mostly crafted from *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds), add vibrancy and contrast to the prominent green and red hue scheme. In the context of Gulikan Theyyam, the hue red is more prevalent in the *mukappala* (face masks) than in the physical paintings and costumes. The Gulikan's *mukappala* (face mask) gives it a supernatural gaze while also representing Theyyam's mighty characteristics. Metallic plates sometimes embellish *mukappala* (face masks), accentuating the face's qualities. The *mukappala* (face mask) is broad and large, with a red backdrop and metallic embellishments on the facial characteristics. All facial features, including the eyes, nose, and mouth, have a wide design. The mouth is highly embellished with two enormous fangs (see Figure 5.13 given below).

Figure 5.13: *Mukappala* (face mask) of Gulikan Theyyam.

The *mudi* (headgear) of Gulikan Theyyam is distinguished by its distinct style, known as *koyyola mudi*, which is skilfully made from bamboo and *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds). In most performances, the towering *mudi* (headgear) that adorns the Gulikan Theyyam is over 10 feet tall, like rib cages extended over the Theyyam's head. The visual resemblance to ribs acts as a metaphor for the ribcages of the departed, representing individuals who have completed their journey in this world. Furthermore, it signifies a ladder made of ribs climbing towards the sky; the elevated *poykaalu* (pseudo legs) of the Theyyam contribute to the significance of this image. Thus, it can be said that the towering structure of the *mudi* (headgear) represents Theyyam's metamorphosis into a heavenly stairway that connects the terrestrial sphere with the heavens after death. The elaborate attire of Gulikan Theyyam creates a fascinating spectacle that captivates the beholder and evokes an atmosphere or psychological state of divination. It serves as a melancholy reminder of life's ultimate truth: everything is transient in comparison to the eternal. The Gulikan Theyyam performance proceeds like an absurdist drama, portraying the profound and unexplained dread about death that pervades our mortal world. Gulikan, as a trickster deity and death envoy, dissolves the barriers between believers, making everyone equal in the sacred moment.

5.6 *Manthramoorthikal* (magical powered idol/deities)

The Kutti Chathans/Kutti Saasthan are the most prominent deities among the *manthramoorthikal* (magical-powered idols). The most significant of the magical-powered Kutti Chathans are the Karimkutti Chathan, Theekutti Chathan, Parakutti Chathan, and Pookutti Chathan. The mythical story of the Kutti Chathan deities revolves around a Brahmin named Kaalakaattu Tantri from the Kaalakaattu Illam family, who carried out Mantra and Tantra near Payyanur in the Kannur district. Because of this, the Theyyam is sometimes referred to as Kaalakaattu Kutti Chathan.

5.6.1 Kutti Chathan

According to legend, the Kaalakaattu Thirumeni was a scholarly nobleman trained in Vedic knowledge who resided in the affluent house of Kaalakaattu. Despite their affluence, he and his wife, Aathol, were unhappy since they were unable to bear children. They prayed and visited most temples and sacred places in their desire to eventually have a child, but nothing helped them achieve their goal. It is believed that when Lord Shiva and Parvathy visited earth disguised as Valluvan and Valluvathi, they had a child in the wilderness. They were obliged to abandon the infant in the wild after giving birth. But Mother Parvathy wasn't ready for this; she did not want to leave the infant alone. So, they donate their newborn as a blessing to the Kaalakaattu couple, hoping that they will take good care of their child. The child is raised to be very brilliant and gifted in almost every profession. However, as he grew older, Kutti Chathan began to oppose and violate customary Brahmin practices. His attitude deteriorates with time as he engages in disruptive activities and causes inconvenience to others.

When Chathan's guru admonished him for not listening, he became annoyed and murdered his guru while escaping. Following a tragic event, he discontinues his studies completely. Sitting alone at home, Chathan grew frustrated and enraged with Vedic hymns and rituals. He chants the hymns wrong but firmly believes he is correct. His disruption quickly became destructive, as he began demolishing essential items such as the fire pit and utensils used for puja and spiritual rites. His anger did not stop there; he also destroyed the garments and textiles at his house. Kaalakaattu Thirumeni, angered at Chathan's way of conduct, decided to send him away. As a punishment, he was taken to a remote cow barn, where he was charged with caring for the herd.

As the days passed, Chathan grew hungry in the barn and slaughtered one cow, which he consumed viciously. When Kaalakaattu Thirumeni

discovered this conduct, he punished Chathan. This caused Chathan to feel that the punishment he is getting is due to his mother's allegations against him. So, he throws stones at her chest. Thirumeni became angry by this and slayed Chathan to pieces. However, Chathan, a supernatural being, did not die, prompting Kaalakaattu Thirumeni to recognise that Chathan was not a normal being. As a response, he summoned even more Brahmins to disable Chathan's magical talents and kill him.

They prepared a fire pit and performed rites before slicing Chathan into 395 pieces and putting them in 29 ceremonial fire pits to release his mystical powers. However, more Chathan came from the fire pit, dancing with ferocious flames that blazed and exploded, finally destroying the Kaalakaattu Illam and the adjoining Brahmin Illam. People say that Poo Kutti Chathan appears when Chathan's severed body pieces fall on the *'poov'* (flower). Some fell on *'kari'* (soot or ash), creating Karim Kutti Chathan. Some burst into *'theey'* (fire), becoming Thee Kutti Chathan. Finally, some *'parannu'* (flew away) turned into Para Kutti Chathan. These are the renowned Chathans. Following this catastrophe, to alleviate the disturbances produced by Kutti Chathan's magical power, the people of the region began to venerate his image through Theyyam.

Another narrative about Kutti Chathan is that a Pulaya lady, who was an underprivileged maid of the locality, became pregnant with a Brahmin child from the Kaalakaattu Illam. Some believe this child was referred to as Kutti Chathan. In order to conceal their unethical actions from the Brahmin community, they chose to imprison the pregnant Pulaya lady in an underground jail. The mother gives birth and cares for the kid while hiding within the jail. Later, the infant develops into a young man who begins smuggling rice and other items for the impoverished and lower-caste untouchables. Kutti Chathan Theyyam is also revered by non-Brahmin groups.

In the Kerala religious system, Kutti Chathan is undoubtedly a divinity. It's known by various names throughout history. It includes 'Kutti Sasthan,'

'Kukshi Sasthan,' 'Sasthappan,' 'Sasthaav,' and so on. Some research claims that the name Sasthan derives from the word Buddha, as "Sasthan" commonly refers to Buddha as a preacher or educator. The name Sasthan is now used to make reference to Lord Ayappan, who is also considered the son of Shiva and Parvathy and was later adopted by the Panthalam King. The term might also be regarded as a synonym for Lord Subramanian, the son of Siva and Parvathy.

Interestingly, the deities Ayyappa and Subramanian have very comparable narratives, identities, and visual connections, indicating that their beginnings may be intertwined. Similarly, Kutti Chathan's outfit resembles a rooster. The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), *mudi* (headgear), face embellishments, and other ornaments are symbolic representations of roosters (see Figure 5.13 given below).

Figure 5.14: Ritualistic performance of Kutti Chathan Theyyam with fire torches, drawn by the researcher.

Numerous research studies have determined that the rooster is the auspicious animal of Lord Ayyappan and Lord Murugan. Thus, the rooster's

presence on Kutti Chathan's body reflects his favourable disposition towards the bird's image

Mukathezhuthu, without its exterior decoration, resembles a rooster's beak, making the Kutti Chathan's connection with Ayyappa and Subramaniann stronger. The drawing is made by lines of red and black lines over the white base color starting from the forehead to the nose. surrounding by the eyes drawing, this drawing makes the face looks like a bird (see Figure5.14 given below).

Figure5.15: *Mukathezhuthu* of Kutti Chathan Theyyam, drawn by the researcher.

To enhance the rooster's appearance, the Kutti Chathan is ornamented with a wooden adornment that is attached over the mouth, chin, and ear. This decoration represents a metaphor for a rooster's beak. The wooden protrusion on Kutti Chathan's ear resembles the fleshy wattles or earlobes found on actual roosters.

The Theyyam's headdress is made of wood and decorated with red lead sheets. The headgear is composed of sixteen distinct design components that, at first look, resemble a blade of air. Interestingly, a more detailed inspection of the Theyyam's other material reveals that it appears to be the rooster's tail, which always flanks behind it. In the concluding stages of the Theyyam's *vellattam* (narrations of each Theyyam genesis) performance, a live rooster's blood is consumed. This ceremony highlights the idea that the whole figure and procedure are connected to the rooster.

5.6.2 Karim Kutti Chathan

Karim Kuti Chathan is the Theyyam form that is believed to have been derived from *kari* (soot/ash). After chopping off Kutti Chathan into many pieces, a shard dropped into the soot, forming the ferocious figure known as Karim Kuttichathan. As per the opinion of Theyyam specialist and performer Rajeesh Maniyara "The *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) in this Theyyam is referred to as *karimthaadi muriyanezhuthu*. This style of *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) is distinguished by the use of kohl to write on the eyelids. First, the exterior of the eye is drawn, followed by a line reaching from the corner of the eye to the forehead, which is the major distinguishing feature."[76] The two opposing side lines on top of the eyes give it a distinct appearance. Beside this, an *ashtadhalam* (an eight-petal flower design) will be drawn in the midst of the forehead.

The cheeks of the Theyyam *iranji poov* (Mimusops elengi) are depicted. As the name suggests, it is Karimthaadi Muriyanezhuthu. Karimthaadi means "black beard," and it is drawn in black with kohl, similar to the eye. Overall, this Theyyam's *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) is an expansion of Kutti Chathan's *mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing). The ornamental embellishments, such as the *Iranji poov*, give it a more distinctive benevolent aspect than Kutti

[76] Rajeesh Maniyara, personal interview, February 15th, 2020, Kannur.

Chathan. *Malayola* (orpiment) dots are placed on top of each kohl drawing to add brightness to the overall hue on the face (see Figure 5.15 given below).

Figure 5.16: *Mukathezhuthu* of Karim Kutti Chathan, drawn by the researcher.

5.6.3 Poo Kutti Chathan

While Kutti Chathan's shattered body fragments dropped into the flowers, Poo Kutti Chathan emerged from those flowers. As the name implies, the Poo Kutti Chathan's main distinctive characteristic is its *mudi* (headgear). The *mudi* (headgear). is shaped like a flower vase, with a symbolic flower on top that symbolises both its name and magical power. *Mukathezhuthu* (facial drawing) and Poo Kutti Chathan's *mekhezhuthu* (body painting) both feature flower motifs. Poo Kutti Chathan's entire torso is embellished with flowery designs face (see Figure 5.16 given below).

Figure 5.17: *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of Poo Kutti Chathan, drawn by the researcher.

5.6.4 Thee Kutti Chathan

The attire worn by Thee Kutti Chathan is reminiscent of that of Kutti Chathan. However, as the name states, Thee Kutti Chathan is a shape formed by fire. This fundamental essence is clearly seen in the Theyyam's costume, which is adorned with several fire torches around the waist. As Kutti Chathan performs, their body twists and turns, giving the impression that the Theyyam is in flames.

5.6.5 Para Kutti Chathan

As the name implies, the Theyyam forms when a portion of Kutti Chathan's corpse flies away after the slaughter. *'Para*,' the abbreviated version of *'parakuka,*' is the Malayalam word meaning fly. So, this Kutti Chathan is called Para Kutti Chathan.

5.6.6 Khandakarnan Theyyam

Khandakarnan, another form of Theyyam, is a *manthramoorthi* (Magical powered idols), a deity with magical powers. The Theyyam's name originates from the Shaivite legend that surrounds it; it states that the deity arose from Shiva's *'khand'* (throat) and emerged through the *'karnam'* (ear) to heal Bhadra Kali's smallpox, thus the name Khandakarnan. Shiva himself later sends the deity to earth.

The Shaivite narrative of Khandakarnan begins when Bhadra Kali slays Mahishasura. After Mahishasura's death, his wife, an ardent Shiva worshipper, began penance to obtain a boon from him. Shiva appears in front of her for a brief moment to remind her not to demand too many boons, which could result in problems. So Shiva simply delivers his sweat drops and disappears from her eyesight. Knowing that Shiva's sweat drops will be strong, she decides to test them on her nemesis, Bhadra Kali, who murdered her husband Mahishasura. She flung Shiva's perspiration upon Bhadra Kali's body, where it all dropped; smallpox formed, and Bhadra Kali got exhausted and comatose.

Following the occurrence, Shiva decided to create Khandakarnan from his neck to treat Bhadra Kali's smallpox. After healing the smallpox, Bhadra Kali instructed Khandakarnan to bring Mahishasura's wife in front of her. While Khandakarnan took her before a vengeful Bhadra Kali, she pleaded for forgiveness for her transgression. Hearing this, Bhadra Kali forgives her and introduces her as Vasoorimaala. After completing this obligation in Kailasa, Shiva sends Khandakarnan to Earth to resolve difficulties and cure smallpox. According to the Theyyam pantheon, the sickness spreads among humans as a result of the gods' and goddesses' fury. Some deities cause ailments, while others cure them. According to this myth, Vasoorimaala is the deity who spreads smallpox, while Khandakarnan heals it among the populace. So, every year, people pray to Khandakarnan to heal smallpox and other ailments.

The native tale about this Theyyam is different; it is said that once upon a time, a *swami* (saint) from Gokarna, southern Karnataka, travelled to north Kerala. When he arrived in Kannuveedu, Kannur district, he grew weary and thirsty. While searching for water, he stumbled upon a toddy tapper. He requests tender coconut water to relieve his thirst from the toddy tapper. Unfortunately, the toddy tapper's attention was drawn to the golden bowl, and when he saw it, he murdered the *swami* (saint) and stole it. People hold the belief that the saint's soul has haunted the place ever since. While the specialists tried to seize the malevolent soul of the *swami* (saint), it entered the body of the lady in the Eramath family home. Finally, after much effort, they manage to transform the malevolent spirit at Kannuveedu *kadappuram* (beach) into a benevolent one.

The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) of the Kandakaranan Theyyam is one of the most basic in the entire pantheon. It is drawn with only two pigments of hue: white as the base hue and red dots of '*chaayilyam'* (vermillion pigment) placed on top of it, earning it the name *'chandrakala karuthachotta.*' The *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) is a symbolic representation of the smallpox spots that spread throughout Bhadra Kali's body, as previously described in the story. Khandakarnan's decoration is very similar to Kutti Chathan Theyyam's. Both Theyyam feature exaggerated wooden lips and earlobes, which might imply that they are variations on the same shape with comparable stories.

Khandakarnan's *mudi* (headgear) is enormous and beautifully ornamented with exquisite coconut leaves. It is known as *Neelamudi irupathonnu pantham*—a word that reflects its extraordinary length. Despite the name, which suggests twenty-one candles, the original adornment comprises sixteen lamps mounted to the top of the marchamayam. This marchamayam is known as the *thiriyoda,* which not only describes the clothing but also personifies the blazing garment worn with torches. The sixteen large torches lighting atop the Theyyam's clothing create the stunning appearance of a deity coming from the flames. In the viewer's perceptions, the Khandakarnan's flames represent the deity's Shaivite influences. However, at the deepest levels of

understanding, the fire signifies purification and rebirth. Since the deity's mission is to cure smallpox, this symbolism of fire can also be read as a curer and a purifier from smallpox disease.

5.7 Structural Symbolism of Magical, Other worldly and Animal deities

Mudi (headgear) constructs the basic structural symbolism of magical, otherworldly, and animal deities, as it does for other types of Theyyam. *Mudi* (headgear) in this type of Theyyam are made mostly from *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds). Using coconut fronds, craftsmen create shapes and forms that capture the character and essence of the Theyyam. However, some animal deities have round or oval *mudi* (headgear), such as Pulli Karimkali, Pulikandan, Puliyoor Kannan, and Puliyoor Kali. Though the *mudi* (headgear) is round and circular in shape, it is worn over the performer's head in the style of an umbrella. The specialist created this *mudi* (headgear) to connect the artists' bodies to the universe's consciousness, allowing them to get transpersonal insight while performing. Though the animal deities are expressive and aggressive, their wrath is linked to the metaphysical and symbolic structure of the *mudi* (headgear), a round object that signifies cosmic energy. Some of *mudi's* animal deities are metaphysical representations of the earth and the natural world, particularly its flora and wildlife. The Theyyams, particularly Mudhala Theyyam (crocodile deities), are good examples of this. These Theyyam structural symbols essentially express the concept of the link between humans and nature. Its *mudi* (headgear) is a metaphysical depiction of the land that survived the turmoil of flood and natural disaster, as well as the continent that erupted from the primordial ocean with all of its animals and reptiles.

Some of the otherworldly and magical deities, such as the Kutti Chathan and its various forms, possess *mudi* (headgear) to establish their identity. All of these Theyyam *mudi* (headgear) are made from a blend of wood and *kuruthola* (tender coconut fronds), which give them individuality. For example, Kutti

Chathan's *mudi* (headgear) is an extremely detailed design that represents the structure of a rooster's tail and is made of wood and thin coloured metal sheets. The other instance is Poo Kutti Chathan, which refers to a flower with a bouquet-like structure constructed of wood and soft coconut fronds.

When it comes to the Thee Kutti Chathan, which is the embodiment of fire, it is decked out in a mudi full of actual fire, giving the impression that it is performing amidst the flames. Thus, in Kutti Chathan and its different manifestations, the *mudi* (headgear) serves as both an identifying mark and a character. The *mudi* (headgear), which is used to create and enhance expressiveness using coconut fronds and wooden embellishments, is the most defining aspect of these Theyyams. Unlike other Theyyam groups, magical, otherworldly, and animal deities wear more costumes composed of natural and organic materials, giving them a more enigmatic appearance reminiscent of nature itself. As a result, it suggests that this group of Theyyams is older than other types of Theyyam, which may have been heavily influenced by the ancient nature worship practice. Even in these categories, the fundamental shape is used to create the distinctive personality of the structural apparel. The fundamental forms, such as circles, squares, and triangles, can be viewed as the fundamental framework for these categories.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Through the categorisation and analysis of the diverse Theyyams within its pantheon, the research discovers that the majority of these Theyyams are formed from the sorrowful narrative, and the art and aesthetics arose as a result of this catastrophic tragedy. In other words, Theyyam is the embodiment and reminiscence of these sorrowful events, as well as the revered ambiance of ritualistic performance art. The majority of its artwork has visually powerful components that resulted from the aftermath of tragic events such as death, misery, and catastrophic insanity. The resulting work has an artistic aspect that compensates for the damage and laceration produced by the sorrowful occurrences. In some ways, the tragic narrative of heroes and heroines arose from north Kerala's original past, complete with sophisticated art and aesthetics, to purify the emotions of the communities around it by appearing as divinities.

It might also be claimed that deified heroes and heroines, with their embellished art and narrative, bring about certain realisations in society, reforming deteriorating standards and values. As a result, creating Theyyams became a responsibility in reaction to the heroic individual's purposeful or inadvertent sacrifice for the community and, by extension, for society. The myriad creative symbolic qualities derived from its narratives reduced trauma

caused by social structure stagnation. To guarantee that this commitment is achieved in a ceremonial and symbolic manner, the Theyyam expert strictly adheres to the traditional technique of presenting art, as well as the use of natural and organic materials, which have been a part of the Theyyam aesthetic since its conception.

6.1 Sacred Geometry and Eco centric Ritual: Theyyam's Symbolic Cosmos

Thus, preserving the *kaavu* (sacred groove) for the purpose of conducting Theyyam performances in a natural environment is part of a larger effort to recreate the traditional context that arose to cleanse society's emotions since the origin of Theyyam. Theyyam is, in some ways, a symbolic ceremonial time machine, transporting the viewer to ancient wisdom through ritualistic symbolism and colour patterns. As a result, audiences of the Theyyam performance acquire a transcendental insight into the Theyyam's ancient history, which was very much part of eco centric existence, as well as an understanding of the relationship between nature, humanity, and the universe.

The ornamental components come from old native space and time, giving Theyyam a mystical and magical existence that evokes nostalgia and sensation for the hero and heroine. The utilisation of an antique environment effectively commemorates their lives metaphysically. Because Theyyam's creative components have remained as natural materials, they maintain a connection and influence from the ancient understandings of the cosmos and its consciousness. Thus, Theyyam becomes a local ceremonial art with a broader psychological significance for consciousness.

Some ornamental components are used on Theyyam to meet this criterion, such as using natural flora and wildlife as visuals while also using actual material. The distinctive flowers, such as *chethi poov*, (jungle geranium), *mallika poov* (Jasmine), *kozhipushpam* (cockscomb flower), *iranji poov* (ilanji flower) *chembakam* (champak flower), *Chemanthi* (chrysanth flower) are often

employed as a symbolic element in Theyyam. The *chethi* blossom (jungle geranium) is inextricably linked to Theyyam; it may be found in practically every type of Theyyam decoration. Even visually, the Theyyam manifestation resembles the *chethi* (jungle geranium); as the name implies, it stands like a jungle flame among the greenery, similar to a Theyyam standing in a *kaavu* (sacred groove). The *kozhipushpam*, also known as plumed cockscomb (Celosia argentea), is the second significant flower in the Theyyam makeover. Aside from the specific native embellishment on Theyyam, these blooms effectively convey universal meaning through their ornamentation. For example, the addition of flower petal patterns to *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) is particularly relevant to this concept, which is the incorporation of a universal idea of sacred geometry into the forms of Theyyam as imagery and a physical object. Because every natural or physiological element in the universe is constructed using sacred geometry and the golden ratio, adorning Theyyam with it makes it a more intricate entity in our understanding of the universe.

Flowers are symmetrically positioned in *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) to represent the symmetry of sacred geometry across the face of Theyyam, one of the universe's manifestations. According to the famous architect and artist Keith Critchlow, “The flower offers many levels of value to the finder, from delight in finding beauty in its colour, fragrance and symmetry to its medicinal benefits. This is the flower as a teacher of symmetry and geometry (the ‘eternal verities’, as Plato called them).”[77] Flowers, he says, might be utilised as sources of recollection, allowing us to remember our own integrity while also enhancing our inner strength of recognition and awareness. What we observe in the geometry of a flower's petals may provide insight into the underlying geometry of everything that exists. Thus, in a sense, the patterns of flora and fauna in the Theyyam *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) are depicted in symmetry to demonstrate the embodiment of symmetrical creation in the cosmos and

[77] Keith, Critchlow. *The Hidden Geometry of Flowers: Living Rhythms, Form and Number.* Floris Books, 2011.

transmit the same content. *Mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) also illustrates the same concept using animal designs and iconography, including the bird, tiger, monkey, elephant, and cow.

6.2 Theyyam's Red Aesthetics and Catharsis

In some ways, Theyyam introduces the traditional aesthetics of colour and symbolism into contemporary society, representing everything in existence, rooted in ancient aesthetics with natural symbolism, loaded with sediments of meaning, which open up to various layers of interpretations. These intricate imageries not only reflect the deep imagination, but they also give a metaphysical insight. With the aim of giving this understanding to the viewer or the worshipper, the Theyyam specialist creates a shock with the strong art intricacies and colour, which is generated to compensate for the tragic incident. The tragic episodes in the Theyyam are not typical; rather, they are depressing because they stem from the darker aspects of society, such as oppression, treachery, dishonesty, jealousy, and greed. These negative forces culminated and ended up in murder, suicide, or disastrous death, causing grief and melancholy in society.

Thus, from the in-depth study on the narration and its colour and symbolism, it is found that, because of the painful and melancholic events in the story of each Theyyam, the art of it also becomes striking and shocking or creates an excitement in the minds of the performer as well as the viewer. The instinct behind the usage of the red colour is, for instance, to create such a shock that it inclines towards the psychological symbolism of death, pain and the very danger of existence. Even if the dominating red colour symbolism of Theyyam is influenced by cultures from its lengthy evolutionary history, the use of red colour symbolism as a psychological propensity towards its art of narrative of tragic events cannot be denied. The predominant red of the Theyyam evokes a psychological impression of anguish and grief, which is at the heart of its inception and artistic dissemination. This striking art creates a cathartic

experience. Thus, the individual's significance as a deity in the Theyyam pantheon is also determined by its ability to elicit cathartic feelings.

The study further reveals that the hue red often appears to symbolise the cause of death or a calamitous event in the life of the hero or heroine, usually associated with fire. Thus, in the Theyyam pantheon, the hue red may also be interpreted as a metaphor of destructive physical fire. The entire embodiment of Theyyam, which consists of *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing), *mekhezhuthu* (body drawing), *mudi* (headgear), *mukappalakal* (face mask), *thalachamayam* (head embellishments), *marchamayam* (body embellishments), *uduppukal* (costumes), *arachamayam* (abdomen embellishment), *kaiykkaru* (hand embellishment) and *kaakkaru* (feet embellishments), intricately carries these aesthetic aspects, as well as red hue and symbolism.

6.3 Theyyam Art's Symbolic Materials and Ancient Traditions

Aside from the psychological value inherent in the hue of Theyyam, the study discovered a symbolic meaning related to the material utilised in its manufacture of the hue. It is especially visible in Theyyam's *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing); the materials used to prepare the *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) also represent a notion that transmits significance to Theyyam. As previously stated, the elements utilised to create the redness of *mukathezhuthu* (face drawing) include vermillion pigment produced from mineral cinnabar and the mineral orpiment, which has multiple connotations in Theyyam and is of worldwide significance. Both the mineral, which has been widely recognised as being utilised in the fabrication of artworks across the world, and its art have been shown to have enormous significance in many ancient societies. For instance, the Asian Tantric practice and European alchemical tradition, in which the production of a pure form of cinnabar is the primary ceremonial activity. Because of this, it can be stated that the creation of the Theyyam is extremely old and that the preservation of tradition is very much practised in its production.

Conclusion

While investigating the structural appearance of Theyyam, the research discovers that, in addition to its colouration, a large number of mythical and symbolic aspects have been added over time. These complex aspects demonstrate its long, hazy historical existence and growth through visual and oral traditions. Theyyam's huge number of symbolic cultural aspects contribute to its mystical and abstract nature. In certain ways, the visual aesthetics of the Theyyam are influenced by the very native existence of nature and ethnology but with a global significance that provides meaning to the universal understanding in an abstract metaphorical manner.

6.4 Theyyam: A Mystical Tradition for Enlightenment and Unity

Overall, Theyyam, with all of its symbolic images, colours, and iconography, produces numerous levels of meaning, transforming it into a mystical and metaphysical entity capable of instilling transcendental insight in the minds of those who rely on it. The majority of Theyyam forms are performed by unprivileged castes from the north Kerala area, and Theyyam performances have long served as an alternate place for unprivileged and backward castes to obtain metaphysical intervention. Individuals from each group experience a tranquil existence and an overwhelming sense of freedom as they prepare for and venerate Theyyam using native materialistic visual aesthetics and knowledge systems. While revering each Theyyam year after year, these communities experience a sense of unity that is made possible by the artistic constancy and precision with which the meticulous detailing of Theyyam is rendered. This process of creating Theyyam over ages and generations elevated Theyyam to a realm of ethereal and enigmatic existence, generating a distinct identity for them.

6.5 Symbolic Colours and Colour of Headgear in Theyyam

Although red has been the main colour, it provides insight into the Theyyam's quality, identity, and historical entity. Aside from that, additional colours such as white, black, green, and yellow provide visual complexity and

an additional dimension of meaning to the Theyyam makeover. Even permutations of these four hues, along with red, are frequently found as portrayed throughout Theyyam clothing; these colours frequently generate meanings and symbolism at multiple levels. For example, tricolour symbolism, which comprises combinations of red, white, and black, is frequently depicted in many forms and imagery.

As explained in the previous chapter, the triangle-shaped mudi with the combined tri-colour symbolism of red, white, and black represents the blazing flames of fire. Some of the *mudi* (headgear) successfully express this symbolism; for example, the Kalariyaal Bhagavathy wears the *valiya mudi*, which is a big triangle-shaped headgear with triangular lines of the tri-colours red, white, and black, representing true fire (see Figure 6.1 given below).

Figure 6.1: *Valiya mudi* of Kalariyaal Bhagavathy, depicting the fire.

However, in the presence of this symbolism, the *mudi* structure's geometrical design transforms the Theyyam into an architectural form rich with ceremonial figures and imagery. 'In mediaeval Indian architecture, the overall structure is considered to be the human body.'[78] 'The main sanctum, which comprises of the idol in temple building, is supposed to be the human head; it is capped by a pyramidal structure reaching upward called 'Shikhara'. Shikara, for example, is the Sanskrit term for a rising mound, peak, tower, or spire. The entire structure of the shikara is based on a central point that extends to the four cardinal points over the base building, which is the primary sanctuary.'[79] Thus, in Theyyam, the metaphysical structure obtained by erecting the geometrical structure over the human body replicates a temple-like construction; that is, it transforms itself into a breathing human body with a revered value. The *mudi* structure is comparable to architecture's shikara, which has multiple implications, including mount, peak, tower, spire, and fire, (see Figure 6.2 given below).

[78] Pinna, Indorf "Interpreting the Hindu Temple Form: A Model Based on Its Conceptualization as a Formal Expression of Measured Movement." *Artibus Asiae*, vol. 64, no. 2, 2004, p. 179-180.

[79] "Shikara." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster,* https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shikara. Accessed 15 Apr. 2025.

Figure 6.2: Structure of Theyyam with *valiya mudi*, which is made from the geometrical shapes.

In the Kalariyaal Bhagavathy Theyyam, two prominent geometrical forms are noticeable: the triangular, pyramidal structure and the square base that extends toward the four cardinal directions. The vibrant use of red, white, and black symbolises rising flames and also functions symbolically as a mount, a tower, and a pinnacle reaching towards the zenith (see figure 6.3 given below).

Figure 6.3: Placing the *mudi* (headgear) of the Kalariyaal Bhagavathy Theyyam.

Furthermore, the tri-colour combination of red, white, and black may be seen in many structural forms of *mudi* (headgear), on the garment, and as an ornate pattern with other artwork in attire. It represents fire in the story of the Theyyam. The other two colours, green and yellow, have connotations tied to the narratives of the specific Theyyam; in certain cases, they are used to depict the flora and fauna.

6.6 Circular geometry in Theyyam

Among the fundamental geometrical forms, the circle is frequently used as a crucial concept in Theyyam *mudi* (headgear), with multiple symbolic implications that are bestowed onto the metaphysical realm of Theyyam. The *vatta mudi* (round headgear) is an excellent example of the circular geometry introduced in the previous chapter. The form is meant to represent the metaphysical entity Mother Earth and the universe, with stars around it. Despite being represented using symbolic and metaphysical imagination, it provides light on the creative vision that strives to express the metaphysical soul of the cosmos. Here, the Theyyam *mudi* (headgear) of mother goddesses is analogous

to the cosmos, implying that she is the creator of every aspect of life in the universe. By embodying the mystical representation of metaphysical visions of the cosmos, the Theyyam performer achieves a deep mental comprehension with the consciousness of the universe. Although abstract and metaphorical, this experience provides performers' psyches with the power of deification. Because the earth and cosmos correspond to the mother of all creation, the performer is likewise deified as such.

6.7 Square geometry in Theyyam

Aside from the circle and triangle, the square is the second most prevalent geometric shape in Theyyam *mudi* (headgear). This geometric shape is the principal framework that supports the main structural form that makes up the majority of Theyyam *mudi* (headgear). The square, like the circular and triangular forms in *mudi* (headgear), creates patterns in decorating and clothing, usually using the same tricolour symbolism of red, white, and black (see Figure 6.4 given below).

Figure 6.4: The posterior view of Thai para devata Theyyam *mudi* (headgear).

6.8 Theyyam Structural form and Tantric influence

According to the research findings, the geometrical shapes, such as the circle, square and triangle shapes in Theyyam *mudi* (headgear), are incorporated from the influence of Tantrism. Apart from the geometrical shapes from Tantrism, the Theyyam also incorporated the other elements of Tantric art, such as the five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space. The metaphysical rendering of all *mudi* (headgear), particularly the round form, is mostly composed of basic tantric shapes and images, which contain the symbolic portrayal of five elements. Some examples include the silver crescent form and circular ornamental patterns; the silver crescent shape reflects the universe's water body. This symbolic aspect may be found most prominently in the *vatta mudi* (round headgear) of the furious mother goddess Theyyam, demonstrating its universal importance.

The combination of the three fundamental geometries – circle, square and triangle shapes – the five colour symbolisms, and the five element imageries can be seen as the influence from ancient tantrism, which is a device form to depict the metaphysical image of the universe. The culture used it for meditative purposes to understand the consciousness of the universe. Although it is part of Tantrism, it can also be seen in other cultures and philosophies around the world.

6.9 Psychological dimensions of Circle, Triangle, Square Geometry in Tantrism and other Philosophies

This study revealed that the combination of these three geometrical shapes was used by ancient thinkers in the majority of significant established civilisations, ideologies, and logical thinking tools. Tantric, alchemical, and empirical subjects, such as mathematics, natural philosophy, and astronomy, are among them. These forms were included in Theyyam as a consequence of Tantric influences. Theyyam's work conveys the same message as Tantric art since it is influenced by Tantric beliefs and philosophy. It maintains that the

individual, as a component of the larger universal being, is no different; it is made from the same energy source. In some ways, the visual and structural features of Theyyam clothing symbolise this philosophy.

Theyyam's attire and makeover, in particular, comprise several tantric imagery constructs designed to produce extrasensory perception in the performer's body. In a manner, by laying *mudi* (headgear) *atop* Theyyam, the artist is associating himself and his body as an integral part of the cosmos.

Tantric practice can be found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and several Jainist esoteric groups. Tantric art is practised in Hinduism and Buddhism through the process of creation of a symbolic diagram of a mandala, which serves as a meditation device. Mandalas are said to represent the completeness of the cosmos, a sanctified region for the gods' receptacle, and a collecting point for cosmic energies. Mandalas is a Sanskrit phrase that denotes circles in the ordinary meaning. According to well-known psychiatrist Carl Jung, "The Sanskrit word mandala means "circle" in the ordinary sense of the word. In the sphere of religious practices and in psychology, it denotes circular images, which are drawn, painted, modelled, or danced."[80]

Jung says that mandalas have a universal nature, across culture and across time, because the circle, square, and triangle combination has been a fundamental geometric element since ancient times. In some ways, it can be viewed as a part of an ancient metaphysical device created to discover the universe's unexplored sources of power. A similar concept arises in Pueblo Indian sand drawings from the American Southwest, as well as in Renaissance and mediaeval alchemical texts, and even in the documentations of far older civilisations. This implies that at some point, every civilisation comes to the comprehension that the ultimate truth of reality is the staggering existence of the universe itself.

[80] C. G, Jung. *Mandala Symbolism: (From Vol. 9i Collected Works).* Translated by R. F. C Hull, Princeton UP, 1972.

Conclusion

Jung proposes the symbolic importance of geometrical forms, particularly the circles in transitory Tibetan mandalas and the alchemical works. In these two works, the purpose of circular geometry is similar. In Tibetan mandalas, circular geometry is used to achieve and sustain focus, whereas in alchemical works, circular geometry represents the synthesis of four components that are always breaking apart, as represented by the square.

Jung explains, “The "quadrature of the circle" or "squaring the circle" was a problem that greatly exercised mediaeval minds. It is a symbol of the *opus alchymicum* since it breaks down the original chaotic unity into the four elements and then combines them again in a higher unity. Unity is represented by a circle and the four elements by a square. The production of one from four is the result of a process of distillation and sublimation which takes the so-called “circular” form: the distillate is subjected to sundry distillations so that the “soul” or “spirit” shall be extracted in its purest state."[81]

‘According to Jung, the circular pattern of a mandala commonly contains a quaternity, or a multiple of it in the shape of a square, a star, a cross, or an octagon, which appears spontaneously in dreams during a period of struggle as a psychological event. According to Jung's research, mandalas frequently arise in the context of psychological estrangement or confusion. In this case, it is clear that the powerful pattern created by mandalas' circular symbolism compensates for the mental realm's chaos and unpredictable events.’[82]

In Jung's terminology, this phenomenon occurred primarily as a result of the circle's centre point, to which everything is tied, or the concentric arrangement of disorderly multiplicity and contradictory elements. He sees this as nature's obvious attempt at self-healing, motivated by instinct rather than

[81] Minako, Okamuro. "QUAD AND THE JUNGIAN MANDALA." *Samuel Beckett Today / Aujourd'hui*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1997, pp. 126-127.
[82] C. G, Jung. *Mandala Symbolism: (From Vol. 9i Collected Works).* Translated by R. F. C Hull, Princeton UP, 1972, p. 4.

intentional reflection of the intellect. His comparative analysis indicates that a fundamental archetype exists everywhere and is not limited to tradition, just as instincts are not necessarily passed down through history. As a result, it is possible to assume that, despite the superficial disparities in the appearances of mandalas, a basic consistency persists, independent of their temporal and spatial origin.

"The squaring of the circle is one of the many archetypal motifs which form the basic patterns of our dreams and fantasies. But it is distinguished by the fact that it is one of the most important of them from the functional point of view. Indeed, it could even be called the archetype of wholeness." [83]

6.10 Psychological dimensions of Colour and Geometrical Shapes in Theyyam

The circular pattern develops as a response to psychological disorientation and dissociation, serving as a technique of compensating for such situations. In the case of Theyyam, the circular *mudi* (headgear), which frequently has mandalas or Tantric iconography, personifies the metaphysical picture of the universe. This circular structure might be seen as a symbol of collective trauma that occurred inside the same cultural region. The tragic death of heroes or heroines may be one of the reasons why they generate such circular patterns and forms as a natural way to self-heal from trauma. In contrast, the vibrant, visible red not only evokes a setting that depicts society's unpleasant psychological occurrences, but it also reflects the circular pattern of mandalas, serving as a symbolic idea that balances and compensates for the community's psychic disruption.

Thus, Theyyam ritualistically performs an emotional purgation by utilising powerful symbolic qualities of colour and geometry, which are evoked by the instinctual reaction to the psychological instability created by societal

[83] Ibid, p. 4.

trauma. For example, the traditional Theyyams Muchilottu Bhagavathy and Kandangottu Bhagavathy successfully represent this sort of schematic phenomenon. Both Theyyams are deified and performed to commemorate the terrible deaths of heroes who were victims of neglectful and discriminatory rules promoted by a stagnant society. These catastrophic events generate intense feelings of mental confusion in people, culminating in collective trauma among the community. Both Muchilottu Bhagavathy and Kandangottu Bhagavathy *mudi* (headgear) arose or were established as depictions of an earth and its surrounding universe in the form of a circular mandala with a tantric element inside. It is a metaphysical representation of the deities' consciousness of the cosmos. This image compensates for the psychological confusion that occurred in the minds of the community members.

The Pottan Theyyam is another captivating example of analogous yet unique phenomena. The facial masks and the embellished headgear of Pottan Theyyam can be viewed as artworks generated from such a disastrous occurrence. While the design does not create a circular or mandala pattern, the portrayal is centred on the roundish, circular line that forms the artwork on the face mask. Furthermore, the *mudi* (headgear) serves as a backdrop for the *mukappala* (face mask), combined with *kuruthola* tender coconut fronds, which intensify the circular structure. In the case of Pottan Theyyam, the creation of such a powerful geometrical symbolic picture is embedded in the tragic death of a highly knowledgeable member of the community. As a result, the aesthetic of art is generated by natural instinct, as the circular patterned portrait lures the spectator in, providing a balance and compensating for the individual's inner confusion within the group.

In certain respects, the act of creating such strong art, which is an outcome of intense mental experience, leads to an enhanced sensation of conscious thought and self-awareness. This consciousness extensively sparks profound reflection on truth, existence, and the meaning of life. Thus, awareness manifests itself during an artwork generation or sculpting process through its

symbolism. Through this creative process, the mind engages in profound reflection, drawing upon imaginative thinking to comprehend and consider challenging and incomprehensible concepts. Then the artist's work evolves into perception itself. The act of creation becomes a study of consciousness.

6.11 Global Cultural significance of the Fundamental Shapes

Since humanity began to contemplate the creative process, various populations and civilisations have generated numerous items and artworks with profound understandings of consciousness. In some ways, humanity's deep contemplation over consciousness and the meaning of existence leads to the universe showing itself in its purest forms and designs. Civilisations imitated these forms and shapes in order to advance to a higher level of understanding, which they then preserved and transmitted to subsequent generations. Historically, these forms were represented metaphorically and abstractly, leaving plenty of freedom for creativity. Furthermore, at a later point in time, creativity gave rise to logical and reasonable notions about these forms and shapes. In some ways, the shapes and forms manifest the universe's pure energy.

Many cultures employ these fundamental shapes and forms in their art, artefacts, architecture, and material culture. Thus, it has a distinctive concept and way of thinking that goes beyond a scientific knowledge system; rather, it has a philosophical thought that strives to solve the mysteries of cosmology and cosmogony. Many early societies used these forms to communicate meaning in a more abstract and symbolic way, depending on imagination rather than rational thought. Especially in the ancient past, interpreting the universe through these symbolic patterns was wholly dependent on imagination with these fundamental shapes.

6.12 The intervention of logical reasoning and creative thinking through Geometry

However, as these forms and shapes eventually gave birth to logic and philosophy, people began to mould matter into tools in order to better understand the cosmos. Through the observation and study of geometry, a new system of knowledge about the universe was established, based on both logical reasoning and creative thought. The moment when the culture recognised that understanding the vast cosmos surrounding them was more essential than everything else in existence. They then focused their attention on the universe's incomprehensible and sublime visuals in existence. Over decades, these civilisations began investigating and chronicling the vast events of the universe in an attempt to make rational sense of them. Fundamental forms and shapes were heavily featured in their records, serving both as tools for comprehension and symbols of deeper meaning. Many archaeological findings indicate human curiosity about the universe, which arose as a result of creative and logical thinking. Scholars refer to these texts as the "omen compendium *Enūma Anu Enlil*"[84] and "the astronomical compendium *MUL.APIN*."[85]

Imagining the universe in various geometrical shapes and forms was a key tool for these creative philosophical ideas about the cosmos. Using this philosophical creative process along with the logical reasoning based on the geometrical shapes, early scientists attempted to estimate the size and structure of the universe. They observed and calculated cosmic distances and sizes using geometric forms and the power of the imagination, establishing the foundation for humanity's comprehension of the cosmos. By discovering natural geometric patterns in the universe's microcosmic and macrocosmic scales, they developed geometrical calculations to determine distances in the universe. They begin first

[84] F. N, Al-Rawi, and A. R. George. "Tablets from the Sippar Library XIII*Enūma Anu Ellil*XX." *Iraq,* vol. 68, 2006, pp. 23-57.
[85] Hermann, Hunger and John Steele. *The Babylonian Astronomical Compendium MUL.APIN*. Routledge, 2018.

with determining the size of the Earth, then the dimensions of the solar system, and eventually the structure of the universe itself. Each discovery established the groundwork for the subsequent one. Despite limited technical advancement, millennia of sharp observations motivated by intense curiosity have allowed humanity to gain a sophisticated understanding of the cosmos.

Kepler proposed one of the most creative ideas about the relative dimensions of planet orbits in the solar system as established by natural geometrical shapes. He proposed a hypothesis related to the five Platonic solids. 'The idea was to imagine a sphere inscribed in an octahedron, then fit the smallest achievable sphere around it, followed by the smallest achievable icosahedron, then another sphere, then a dodecahedron, one more sphere, then a tetrahedron over it, one more sphere, finally a cube, and one more sphere over it, generating six spheres. Keppler anticipates that the dimensions of these six spheres will be the same as the dimensions of the orbits of the six known planets.'[86] Because these are Platonic solids, they are highly organic or universal sets of ratios (see Figure 6.5 given below).

[86] S. M, Blinder. "*Wolfram Demonstrations Project."* demonstrations.wolfram.com/KeplersMysteriumCosmographicum, 2009, demonstrations.wolfram.com/KeplersMysteriumCosmographicum. Accessed 1 May 2025.

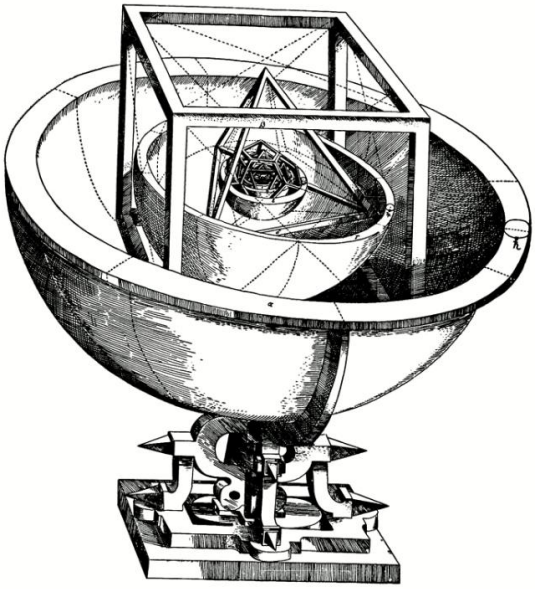

Figure 6.5: Picture depicting the idea of **Johannes Kepler** (1571-1630) that the planets of the universe were made up of Platonic solids set within each other.[87]

Even though Kepler's theory failed to prove the size and form of the planets' orbits, since the planets' orbits are elliptical rather than circular. However, when the theory is employed to mean orbital rotation, the geometrical model clearly emerges.

6.13 Foundational geometry and its connection with Universe

6.13.1 Circular geometry

The significance of these shapes lies in their faculty to constitute a small part yet very insightful character of the universe, directing towards the meaning and possible structure of it. A circle, for example, represents the infinite breadth in the universe. Similarly, as there are infinite numbers between two adjacent numbers, like 1 and 2, a circle is made of infinite points, all equidistant from a single point from its centre. In this wise, the circle conveys the same infinite nature as the cosmos. In philosophical terms, a circle can be seen as a miniature

[87] Johannes, Kepler. "Kepler's Platonic Solid Universe Model." *World History Encyclopedia*, 29 Aug 2023. Web. 03 Apr 2025.

representation of the universe, an expression of the universe's boundless and eternal existence. Furthermore, within a circle, each of the infinite number of points has a dualistic character; they function similarly as positive and negative integers. This duality divides the circle's points into a spectrum of positive and negative infinities. The pattern is reminiscent of the repeated formation in the 'Fibonacci sequence.'[88] (see Figure 6.6 given below).

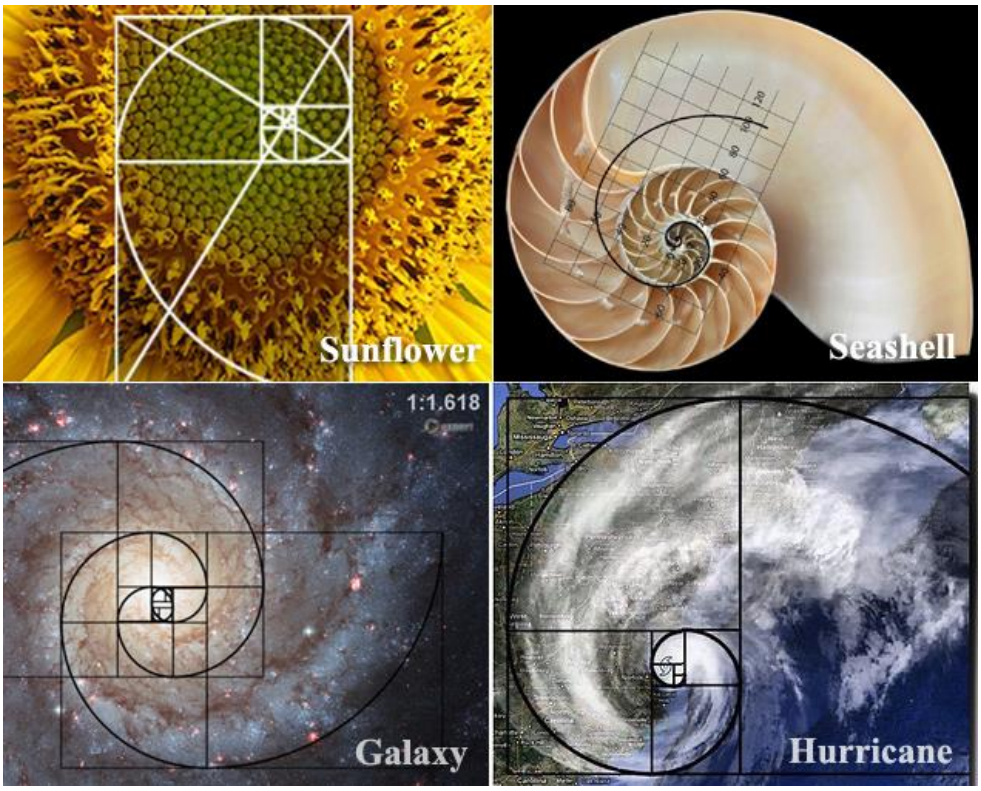

Figure 6.6: "Fibonacci spiral" reveals itself all over nature. [89]

[88] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Fibonacci sequence". *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 10 Feb. 2025, https://www.britannica.com/science/Fibonacci-number. Accessed 4 April 2025. **Fibonacci sequence**, the sequence of numbers 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, …, each of which, after the second, is the sum of the two previous numbers; that is, the *n*th Fibonacci number $F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$. The sequence was noted by the medieval Italian mathematician Fibonacci (Leonardo Pisano) in his *Liber abaci* (1202; "Book of the Abacus"), which also popularized Hindu-Arabic numerals and the decimal number system in Europe. The numbers of the sequence occur throughout nature, such as in the spirals of sunflower heads and snail shells. The ratios between successive terms of the sequence tend to the golden ratio φ = (1 + Square root of√5)/2 or 1.6180….

[89] *https://www.dafyomi.co.il/general/info/torahau/gen/img/fibonacci.jpg*, Accessed 4 Apr. 2024.

For example, in an imaginary sense, one can possibly state that standing at an edge section of the universe is like standing on a point that simultaneously bears both positive and negative infinite value. Because of this, there will be no horizon or borderline, and the universe's boundaries will be meaningless. Instead, the universe may be perceived as a continuous arrangement of areas with opposing curvatures, positive and negative, that fold endlessly into each other. Because of this, the universe has no beginning or end. Alternatively, in a poetic sense, we live in a world contained within a grain of sand, which is part of another vast cosmos. That world is likewise a dot within another, resulting in an infinite stream of universes that fold into one another. Beyond count, this multiple dimension threads through the infinite loop, just like a point in the perfect circle with endless points of infinity. When this notion is envisioned in three dimensions, the circle transforms into a sphere. Thus, like in hyperbolic geometry, the points on the sphere's surface will be infinite in number and have positive and negative curvature (see Figure 6.7 given below).

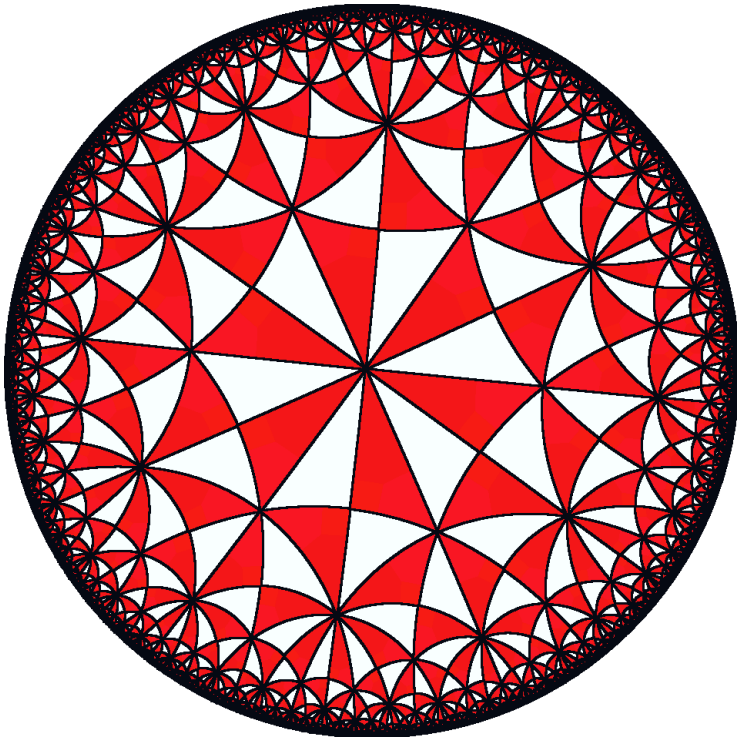

Figure 6.7: Tesselation of Poincaré ball model of hyperbolic space' with positive and negative curvature.

According to Nobel Laureate in Physics, Roger Penrose, "Hyperbolic geometry is a representation in which the entire 'universe' of the hyperbolic plane is 'squashed' into the interior of a circle in an ordinary Euclidean plane. The bounding circle represents 'infinity' for this hyperbolic universe."[90]

It states that, on this hyperbolic plane, each point exhibits positive and negative curvature, and the number of points is infinite. This can be similar to the theoretical conception of the universe, in which the infinite continuous loop transforms space and time into mystical entities that never begin or end. Space and time have no beginning or end in this universe, and they are self-sufficient. And that is one manner in which the universe's awareness might be considered plausible and likely. Because vastness and minuteness do not have meaning in an infinite cosmos; everything is simultaneously massive and minute, existing inside the inexplicable existence of consciousness.

6.13.2 Square geometry

The square, another unique organic shape in the cosmos, is formed by the four cardinal directions of the universe. A square may be formed by eliminating all of a circle's infinite points while maintaining its four cardinal points. In other terms, it is the universe's enclosed space formed by the four cardinal points. Because of this, it can display to us the four directions of the whole universe. At first glance, it appears to be a geometrical form capable of absorbing and transmitting energy from its core to the four cardinal directions. Because of its link and support with the four cardinal directions, it can be regarded as a well-balanced structure, similar to the circle.

[90] Roger, Penrose. *The Road to Reality: A Complete Guide to the Laws of the Universe.* pdf, Jonathan Cape, London, 2004.

6.13.3 Equilateral Triangle geometry

Because the circle and square are enclosures, another conceivable shape is the equilateral triangle, which is the most basic type of enclosure with the fewest points. Conceptually, it is the minimum level of completeness—the first form capable of enclosing space. It may be considered as limiting the circle's infinite points to the fewest number of points required to make an enclosed shape consisting of the three points. Less than three points do not form an enclosure; otherwise, the shape would fail to thrive. The triangle is a unique form because it represents the dialectical logic of the basic trinity: body, mind, and spirit; birth, life, and death; thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. It signifies the union of two polarities that result in the resolving entity, which is made up of two opposing but autonomous, eternally evolving forces, positive and negative; their interaction creates the third. In philosophical terms, it represents the universe's dialectical character; a constant interplay of conflicting principles leads to development, transformation, and unity. A triangle is unique in that it may only point in two directions, one of which is diametrically opposed to the other. And it can only coexist because two directions are dependent on one another. For example, the universe's wave pattern is a principle with two polarities. Other instances include an elevation and a submerging, which cease to exist in the absence of the other. In a conceptual sense, this form represents both everything and nothing.

The formation of a crest as a result of a dip in a neutral space or surface, such as the Earth's surface, causes substantial changes in the surrounding environment. The Himalayas, the world's largest mountain range, are an excellent example of this, having a significant impact on their surrounding region and the entire planet. The Himalaya play an important role in influencing the overall weather pattern of the Indian mainland and adjoining regions by controlling monsoons and land temperatures. Beyond their influence on the environment, enormous mountains influence the structuring of human culture; they lead civilisations to evolve in their own unique ways and lifestyles by

coping with the environmental features of the mountain. This might explain why, throughout antiquity, most cultures have placed a higher value on mountains. They consider it sacred and mystical; thus, numerous mythological legends have grown around it since ancient times. Many archaeological finds support these mythical traditions about the mountain's greater importance and mystical capabilities. Interestingly, the mount is depicted in several myths using triangle imagery. The Babylonian map of the world is an excellent illustration of this (see Figure 6.8 given below).

Figure 6.8: Babylonian map of the world[91]

'The Babylonian world map, an ancient global artefact, illustrates the world's earliest map conception. The map, presented in the form of a clay tablet,

[91] "A close-up view of the Babylonian map of the World. This partially broken clay tablet contains both cuneiform inscriptions and a unique map of the Mesopotamian world." *https://digitalmapsoftheancientworld.com/ancient-maps/babylonian-map-of-the-world/*, Accessed 5 Apr. 2025

depicts both the known and undiscovered worlds of Mesopotamia, with circular and triangular forms and cuneiform markings. The round design represents the known world of Mesopotamia, while the triangle shape encircling the second circle represents the mountain, which is said to be a region of magic and mystery.'[92]

Mountains have long been regarded as the pinnacle of mystery and an inconceivable source of magical power, as well as a sacred location by many civilisations. Their immensely elevated presence and significant influence on the surrounding area's habitat and weather made them magnificent and treasured. Perhaps it is partially because they appear to provide a point of touch with the overwhelming vastness of the universe. Perhaps for this reason, many cultures try to recreate the mountain with human understanding, erecting a mount-like or high structure. Humans built the structures on the landscapes to capture the enigmatic, magical character of the mountains. They designed these mount-like constructions because they represent the pinnacle point between earth and sky, full of mystery and enigma that allows one to approach the grandeur of the universe. Because mountain formation and its existence are based on cosmic order, similar to fire, their metaphysics encompass the entire universe's ordered structure in the form of a triangle, from chaos to order. The triangle depicts the order that arises from the chaotic round universe. Similarly, cosmic chaos's spacetime distortion resulted in the formation of mountains.

6.14 Human made architectural expression of cosmic aspiration

For example, architectural buildings created by humans to investigate the ultimate and unknown typically have this quality. The majority of these structures feature a distinguished mass of peaks, reaching close to the unimaginable grandeur of the boundless cosmos. Throughout history, we have constructed such architectural environments for discovering and confronting the

[92] Baugh, L. Sue. "Babylonian Map of the World". Encyclopedia Britannica, 23 Feb. 2024, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Babylonian-Map-of-the-World. Accessed 5 April 2025.

most profound mysteries of existence. Through the ceremonial activity, mostly illusive and abstract, each culture brought these areas to life. For example, Buddhist, Jain, and Hindu religious architecture on the Indian mainland features a crested structure above the top of the principal deity's sanctum, reaching close to the cosmos.

Similarly, the architectural structures like pyramids have this characteristic with solid mass; the pyramidal structure can be seen constructed throughout the world since the very early time of the great human civilisations. Notable examples are the massive pyramids of the Giza plateau, the step pyramid of Djoser in Saqqara, and the red pyramid and bent pyramid in the Dahshur pyramid complexes. When it comes to the South American mainland, there are several Mesoamerican pyramids, such as the Teotihuacan pyramid complex, which includes the Pyramid of the Sun and the Pyramid of the Moon; the Chichen Itza Mayan step pyramid; the Great Pyramid of Cholula; and the Monte Alban pyramid complex. Other prominent pyramidal structures are the Ziggurat of Ur in Mesopotamia, the Pyramid of Cestius in Rome, the Guatemalan pyramid Tikal, the ancient Mayan ceremonial centre, the Nubian pyramids in the Nile Valley of Nubia, and the Brihadeshwara Temple in Thanjavur, India. These structures serve more than ritualistic and ceremonial reasons in this culture; they also signify people's desire to understand the world and beyond, as well as their fascination with the unknown and inexplicable existence.

6.14.1 Tower of Babel

Many massive pyramidal constructions once covered the Earth, built to search for the unknown and unfathomable. Cultures gave the unknowable different names and imagery, referring to it as the Almighty or God. Aside from architectural archaeological finds, literary and mythical legends from the ancient past give insight on this subject. One of these is the biblical text of Genesis 11:1-9, which mentions the Tower of Babel. ‘The story says that people

now speak the same language. Then people travelled east, finding a plain near Shinar and settling there. After establishing themselves there, they wished to build a metropolis that ascends to the heavens and is closer to God. As the structure of Babel is being built, God appears and declares, "If people speaking one language can build this tower, they can do anything; whatever they plan will be impossible for them." So, God alters the people's language so that they can no longer comprehend one another. After that, they abandon building the metropolis and spread around the globe.'[93]

The story is about the origins of many languages across the world, but it also depicts a tower or structure that seeks to be close to the gods. Attempting to learn the truth about God by investigating the universe's comprehension. Artists have imagined and depicted the Tower of Babel in many ways over the years. The majority of it has a cylindrical structure, comparable to a tower. One of the most renowned artworks is Pieter Brueghel's The Great Tower of Babel, created during the Dutch Flemish Renaissance (see Figure 6.9 given below).

[93] The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Tower of Babel". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 27 Mar. 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/Tower-of-Babel. Accessed 1 May 2025.

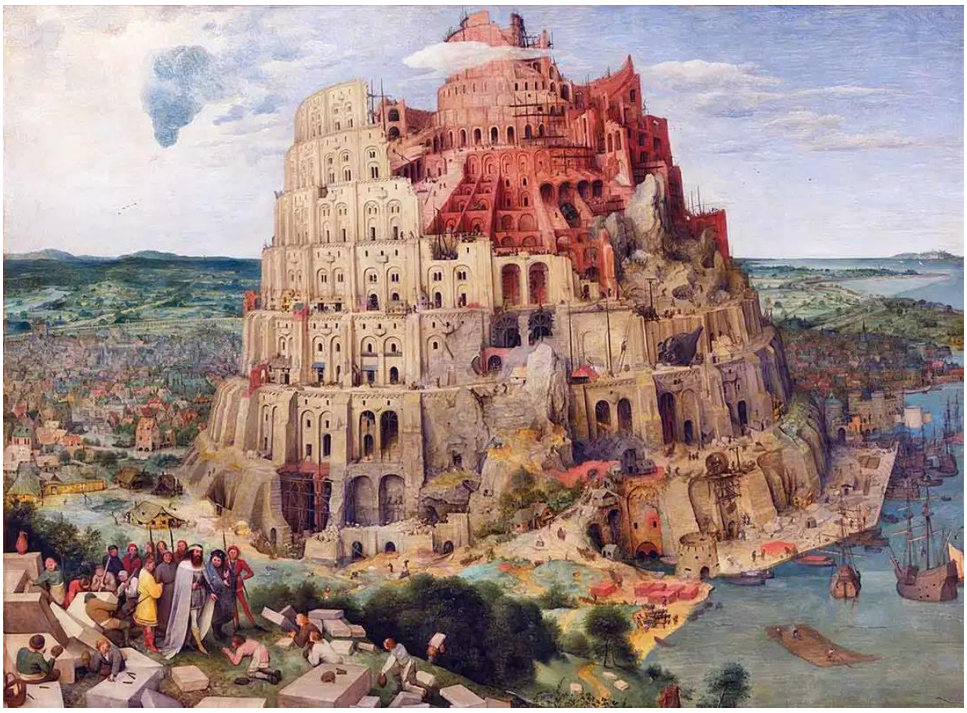

Figure 6.9: "The (Great) Tower of Babel by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, c. 1563,"[94]

The Tower of Babel story is about the desire for a mysterious force, something beyond comprehension, God. In pursuit of it, they are seeking to construct a physical structure that will approach God. Similarly, examine the pyramidal structure. Most pyramids are created to understand the presence of an unfathomable power, to connect with eternity, to grow closer to God, and, in some cases, to become God himself. For example, pharaohs (kings) built the Egyptian pyramids to achieve heavenly power and enter the eternal afterlife.

6.15 Fundamental Geometries and Fractal pattern in Cheops structure, a rethinking of pyramid building.

According to Egyptian legend, the shape of the pyramids corresponds to the shape of the primordial hill Beben, from which the Egyptians believe the earth or land was formed from primordial waters. The shape of it is additionally

[94] Catherine, Dent. "The Tower of Babel in Art and Literature (6 Examples)." *TheCollector*, www.thecollector.com/tower-of-babel-art-literature/. Accessed 1 May 2025.

believed to represent the lowering sun rays. The Great Pyramid of Cheops is visually simple yet architecturally profound. 'The design has a relationship with the golden ratio; the apex angle is remarkably near to it.'[95]Its architectural structure endures as a marvel of engineering, even today. Its construction is a topic of significance and discourse. Though various hypotheses about its construction exist, the origins of it remain unknown. Geometrically, the shapes used in the pyramid are mostly two, the square and the triangle, similar to several of the pyramids across the world (see Figure 6.10 given below).

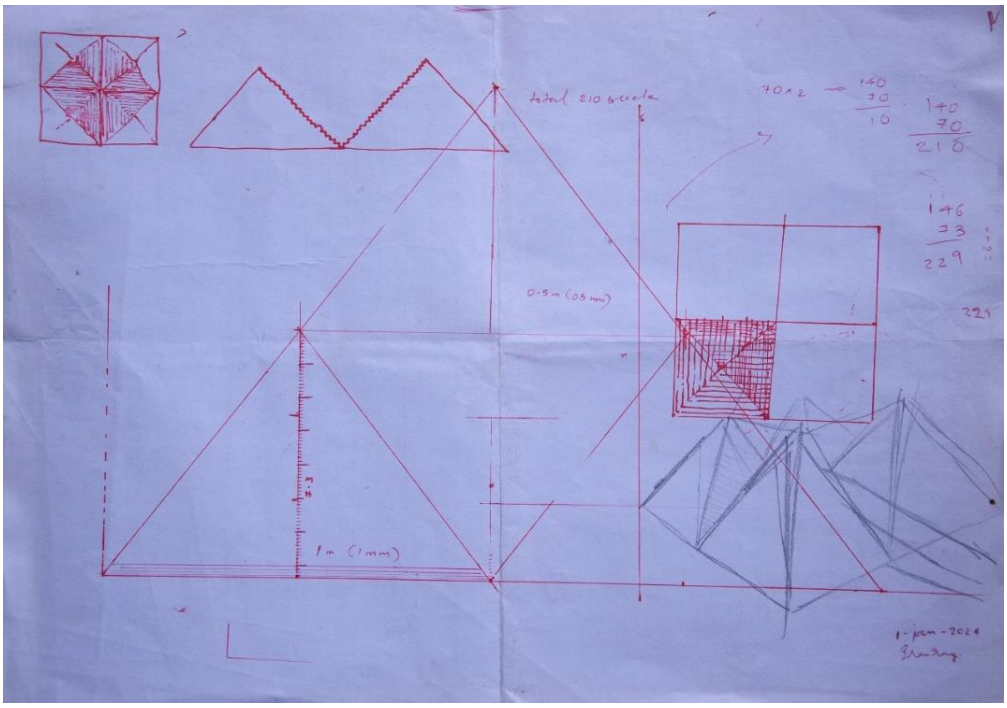

Figure 6.10: Drawing of elevation view of the pyramid of Cheops, drawn by the researcher.

However, unlike other pyramids, the Pyramid of Cheops is salient for its sophistication, not only because of its enormous dimension but also because of its extraordinary engineering during a time when technological innovation was limited.

[95] Richard A, Dunlap. *The Golden Ratio And Fibonacci Numbers*. New Jersey: World Scientific, 2006, pp. 3-5.

Conclusion

As previously said, this research expands on the theory of the pyramid's creation by examining the fundamental essential shapes observed in artwork all over the world that are created to understand the concept of the cosmos and its consciousness. However, the pyramidal shape has a hidden significance: it may generate a fractal with its solid mass. A comprehensive examination reveals that the pyramid's base is first constructed with four miniature pyramids adjacent to one another (see Figure 6.11 given below).

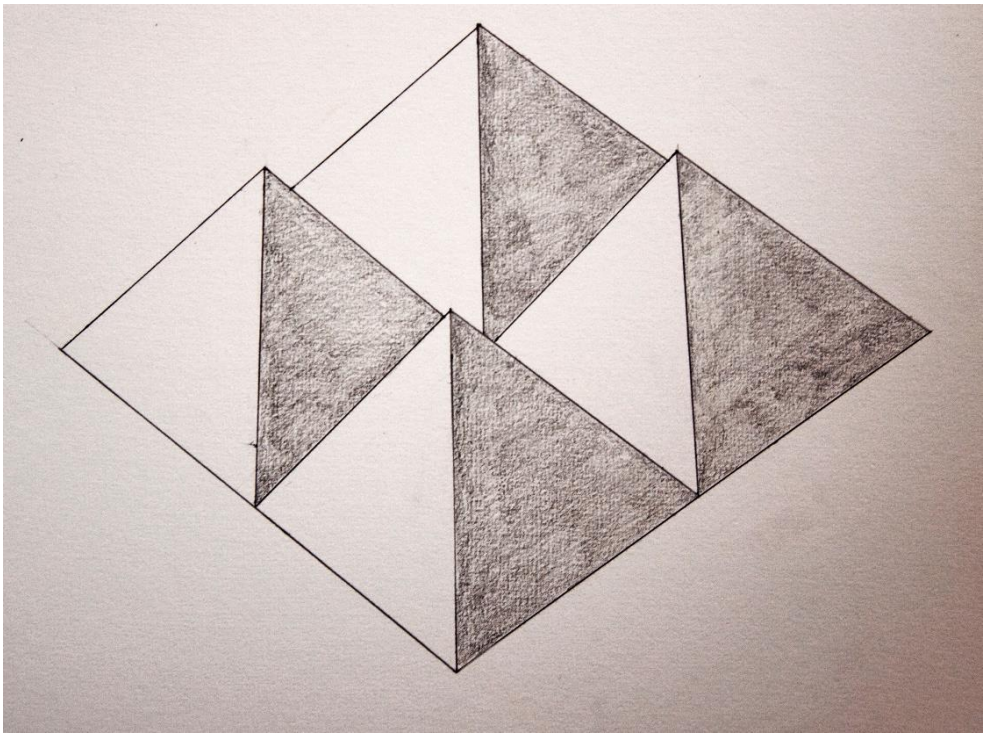

Figure 6.11: Drawing of four adjacent base pyramids, conceived and drawn by the researcher.

Further, ramps are employed to bridge the space between the four pyramids on all four sides (see figure 6.12 given below).

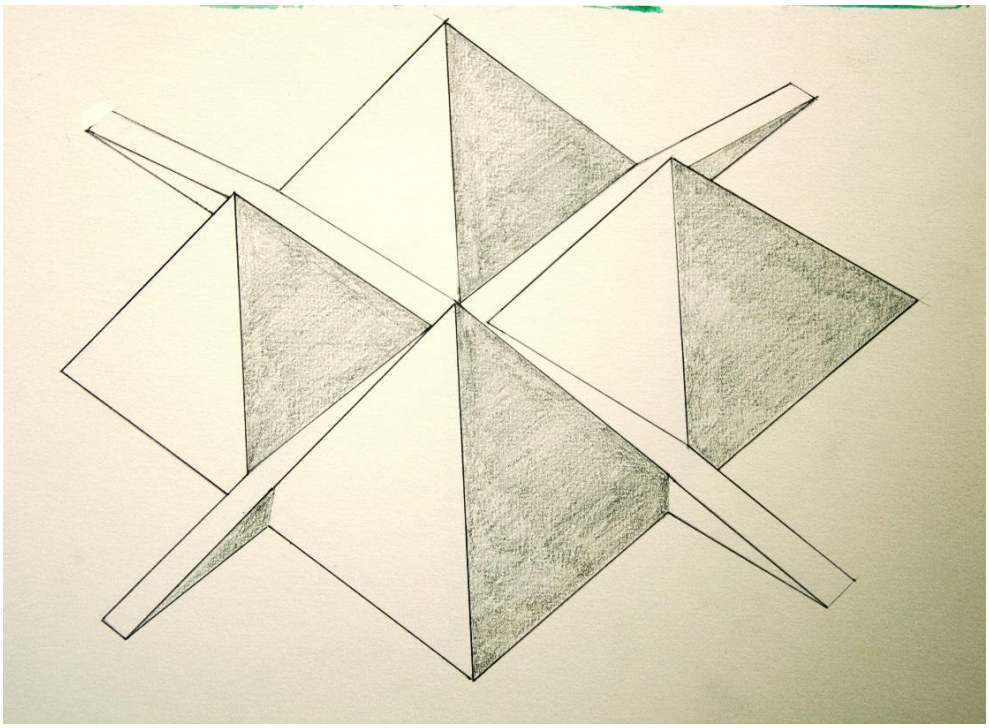

Figure 6.12: Drawing of four adjacent base pyramids with four side internal ramps, conceived and drawn by the researcher.

After constructing this structure, the void area between the four pyramids can be filled with materials using four internal ramps, resulting in a well-balanced plateau-like structure or the bottom section of a pyramid (see the Figure 6.13 given below).

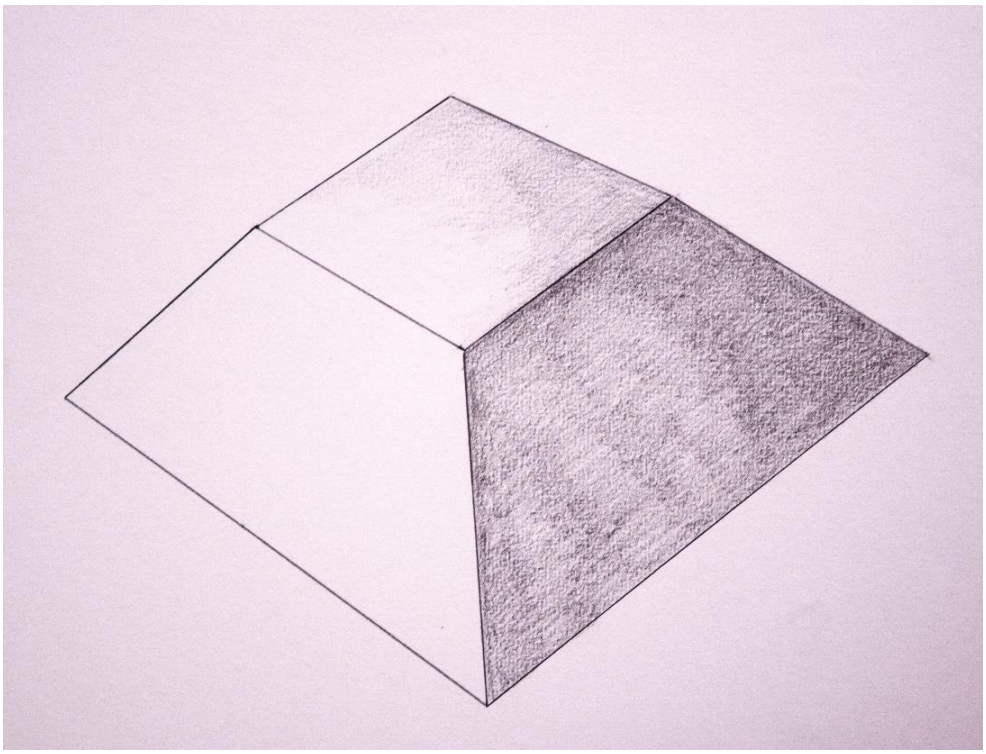

Figure 6.13: The bottom portion of a pyramid or the well-balanced plateau-like structure.

The final pyramid is then constructed on top of the plateau-like construction, with the interior ramps intact. This produces a comprehensive and well-balanced pyramidal architectural structure. As a result, this approach may be regarded as a feasible and viable building strategy for Cheops' Pyramid. Thus, it can be said that the Cheops Pyramid is a complex of five pyramids; the base consists of four nearby pyramids, with the fifth built on top of them.

The method is most suited and probable for a well-balanced pyramid building, such as Cheops', since if the stones are arranged spirally until the zenith, the structure will not be well balanced.

The main advantage of this architectural building approach is in its ability to produce a fractal-like shape, a pattern that may repeat itself to varying degrees. This self-repeating capacity allows the building to grow and soar in dimension while retaining its original shape. This may be accomplished by

using the pyramidal construction method explained above. That is, three additional equivalent pyramid buildings will be built adjacent to the previously completed pyramid, resulting in four pyramidal base constructions similar to the earlier process. This four-adjacent pyramidal construction will look like a partial bloom of a four-petalled flower. Furthermore, the void between the pyramids is filled in the same way, forming a massive plateau-like structure or half of a larger pyramid. Finally, the big pyramid is created on top of the half-pyramidal structure, which is four times the size of the previous pyramid. However, this method can be continued indefinitely; as a consequence, the pyramid's pinnacle will begin to soar towards infinity, a structure reaching for the sky and the skies in pursuit of an unfathomable existence. Using this type of building process, one may create a structure that stretches to infinity, adding to its fractal and rising like the Tower of Babel.

In the contemporary day, this architectural technique can be employed to construct structures for spiritual or intellectual purposes (see Figure 6.14 given below).

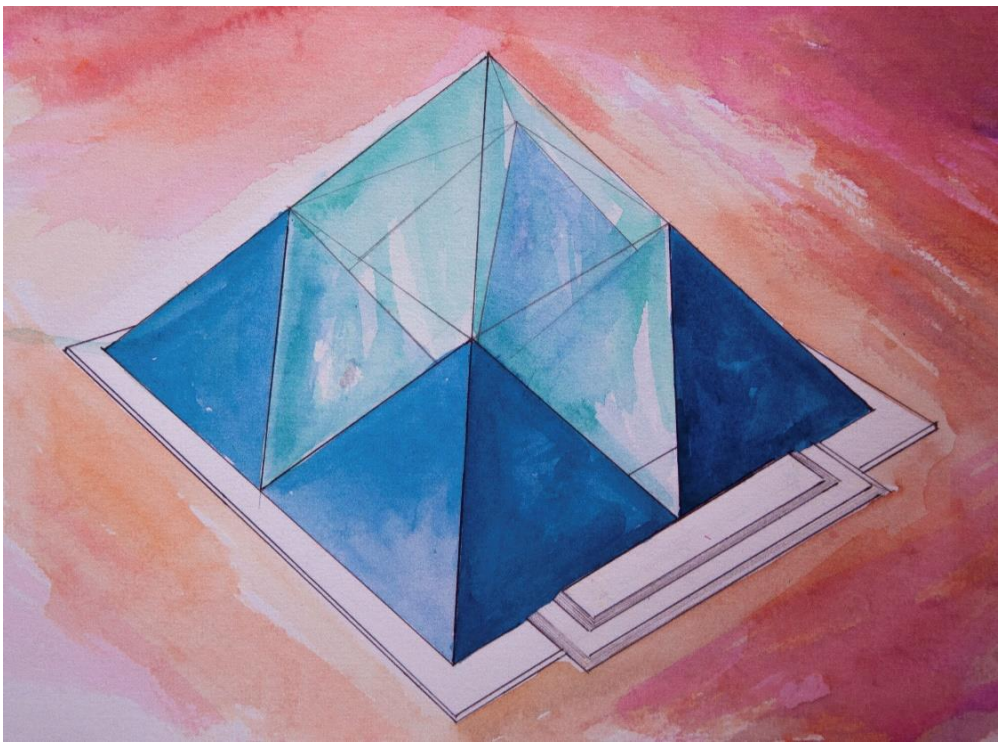

Figure 6.14: Feasible contemporary architecture, conceived and designed by researcher.

6.16 Theyyam as Cosmic Architecture

Thus, in the instance of Theyyam, the structural attire, which is formed by combining three essential shapes, such as circle, square, and triangle, is intended to represent a symbolic image of the earth and the surrounding cosmos. This structural costume is designed to allow one to experience the cosmos in a more mystical, ceremonial way rather than via rational thought. Theyyam is attempting to capture the philosophical image of the cosmos by combining these essential forms. Like other temple constructions, it attempts to link to energy sources from other dimensions of the universe in an abstract fashion through its essential design. Here, a human individual combines with the universe's entity to construct its architecture, attempting to do this by becoming the universe's metaphysical, comprehensive image. Because it is an old form of art, it expresses concepts and knowledge about the cosmos in a symbolic, ritualistic fashion.

As a result, it can be claimed that it is establishing facts concerning the universe based on an ancient symbolic and abstract knowledge system. The circle with its disorder communicates the infinite measurement of the cosmos, and it is decorated by the furious mother goddess to represent her furious energy, which is analogous to the chaos of the universe. The triangular form, on the other hand, depicts the cosmos's crest, which signifies harmony; the shape was worn by some of the mother goddesses and the male Theyyam to express their calm nature in the midst of the turmoil of the round universe. The square is commonly regarded as a ground or foundation for the two fundamental geometries, circle and triangle.

In certain Theyyams, the essential shapes are combined to create more complex forms, resulting in symbolic pictures. For example, certain male deities are topped with mudi (headgear) decorated with symmetrically aligned

butterflies that represent the universe's golden ratio in microcosm. The concept of the universe is also expressed in Theyyam through the usage of flower petal designs, which represent the universe's microcosm. In consequence, Theyyam transforms into a sophisticated structure composed of very exact patterns and symbolic imagery taken from ecology, culminating in a whole cosmos containing the planet and its living beings. Thus, it can be said that Theyyam, in its entirety, is a combination of macrocosmic and microcosmic entities that rely on the human body in search of the energy of the universe's consciousness.

The majority of Theyyam structures and intricate shapes are embellished with microcosmic and macrocosmic imagery of the universe. The Theyyam specialist permutes these images and forms to generate each Theyyam's unique architectural structure. The permutation contains natural and supernatural symbols of transcendence, such as flora and fauna that reflect the golden ratios, as well as symbolic representations of the universe's five elements, respectively. Because Theyyam is an entity formed by the synthesis of elaborate symbolic pictures, shapes, and forms derived from images from both the natural and supernatural dimensions of the cosmos, it evolves into a supernatural realm or higher levels of dimension.

According to the research, it can be concluded that mankind has tried a number of methods and techniques to gain knowledge of the cosmos and its existence since its inception. Theyyam is one of those who attempts to imagine the universe through the eyes of living beings on Earth. It aims to understand the cosmos with minimal material and matter, relying on powerful cognitive and symbolic representations. Because Theyyam is a powerful entity that stems from the combination of strong art and strong emotions that are part of a community's collective psyche, it creates a high energy that can understand and reach out to all the dimensions of the universe in a metaphysical way. Because Theyyam is a powerful entity formed by the confluence of strong art and strong emotions inside a community's collective psyche, it generates a high energy

capable of understanding and reaching out to all dimensions of the universe in a metaphysical sense.

The importance of Theyyam, as well as most other metaphysical art forms, is that they attempt to relate to or understand the universe's consciousness through pure energy. Through its emotions and rich imagination, art reflects the cosmos itself. Everything in the universe is made solely of energy, which is the single source of the universe's existence and consciousness. The vast majority of the cosmos is made up of energy, which exists in all dimensions of its existence. It is unstoppable and inexplicable; everything in this universe that appears as matter is an illusion, but energy is real." A quantum experiment in space has proven that reality is whatever you make it to be. That is, the photon, or quantum of light, acts as both a particle and a wave depending on how you measure it."[96]

It reveals that everything in matter form is an illusion; energy is limitless, can assume any shape, and exists at any time and everywhere. Light is the quickest energy we know in the cosmos, and it is limitless. To comprehend the universe's additional dimensions, matter in the form of technological growth will become inadequate. To reach the universe's dimensions, one must rely only on energy sources. Thoughts (another kind of pure energy) may grasp the universal dimension's energy. We think and generate pictures deliberately, and energy's consciousness may alter it into whatever form and shape it requires. Our ideas and sentiments are the purest kind of energy that we cannot see but exists everywhere, and they are a component of the universe's higher dimension of energy. As a result, when we desire to learn about something in the cosmos, the pure energy of the universe sends us comprehension. Our minds absorb this

[96] Adrian, Cho. "Quantum experiment in space confirms that reality is what you make it. A photon is both a particle and a wave until you choose how to measure it." *https://www.science.org/*, www.science.org/content/article/quantum-experiment-space-confirms-reality-what-you-make-it-0. Accessed 3 May 2025.

comprehension and convert it into matter-language knowledge that we can interpret. Shapes, forms, and creativity are some examples.

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Ph.D. SEMESTER TRANSCRIPT

REG.NO : 17SFPH01 SEMESTER : 1

EXAMINATION : Ph.D. / Folk Culture Studies

MONTH AND YEAR : Nov 2017

NAME OF THE STUDENT : SREERAG T P

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FS801	Introduction to Folk Culture Studies	4.00	PASS
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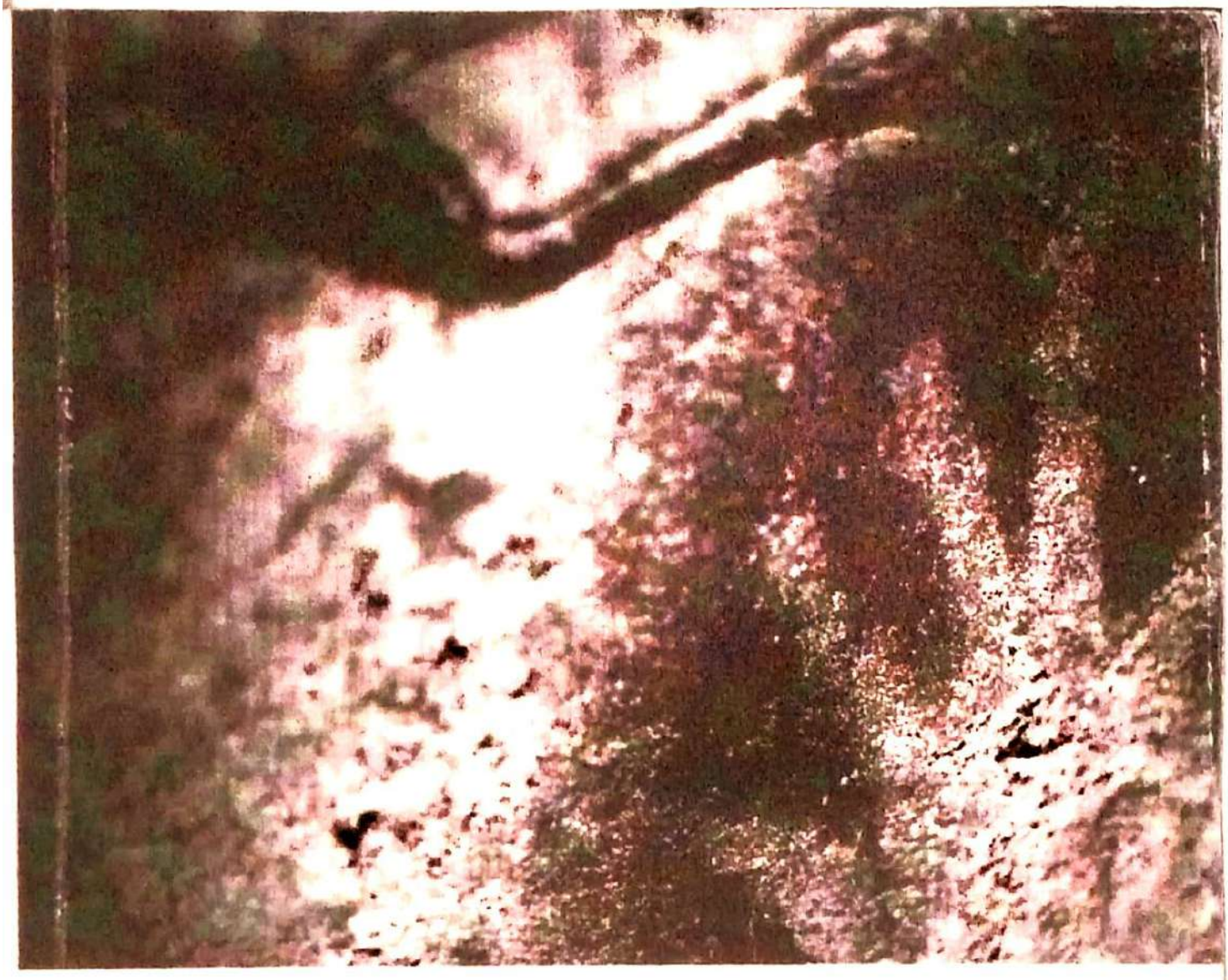
Date of Issue : 4/24/2018



Volume 75
Number 1-2
January-June 2022
ISSN: 0012-8686

THE EASTERN ANTHROPOLOGIST

FOUNDED IN 1947 BY D.N. MAJUMDAR

Serials Published by
SERIALS PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD. (New Delhi)

On behalf of
ETHNOGRAPHIC & FOLK CULTURE SOCIETY
Lucknow (India)

Sreerag. T. P

NARRATIVES AND BELIEFS: SYMBOLIC MEANINGS IN THE MUDI AND MUKATHEZHUTHU OF THEYYAM

Abstract

Theyyam is the sacred folk-art tradition of north Kerala, comprised of the forms of goddesses and God, deified heroes, and heroines, and other forms related to ancient nature worship. The origin of Theyyam is vague, but the literary sources show that the art-forms past mention in Sangam period literature.Each community of north Kerala has its particular sets of Theyyam, which is performed to attain specific needs in people's life. For this, Theyyam is venerated according to the role type with an excessive amount of symbolic and iconographic images that make a level of metaphysical insight on the performer's body and eventually a vehicle for the deities. To create the metaphysical insight into the performer's body and thereby worshipper's mind, each Theyyam is revered with an excessive amount of iconic and symbolic images. The art of veneration of Theyyam is a multidimensional process consisting of visual cultural material that are Mukathezhuthu (face writing), Mekhezhuthu (body writing), Mudi (headgear), and aniyalam (costumes) as well. This visual cultural material loaded with symbolic and iconographic element have various cultural implications, which is transmitted down to the present mainly through oral transmission, and inherited practice of it.

Thus, this present paper explores the Theyyam making process and cultural symbolism associated with it. To analyse and study this, the paper goes through relationship between Visual Semiotics the Theyyam and the narrative aspects and belief of it.

Keywords: *symbolic images, iconography, veneration, multidimensional art, visual semiotics.*

Theyyam is the sacred folk-art tradition of north Kerala, comprised of the forms of goddesses and God, deified heroes, and heroines, and other forms related to ancient nature worship. The origin of Theyyam is vague, but the literary sources show that the art-forms past mention in Sangam period literature.Each community of north Kerala has its particular sets of Theyyam, which is performed to attain specific needs in people's life. For this, Theyyam is venerated according to the role type with an excessive amount of symbolic

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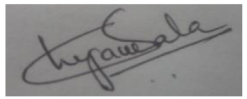

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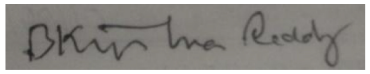

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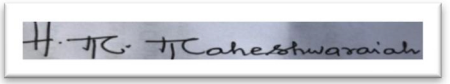

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by Sreerag T P

Submission date: 15-Jul-2025 04:15PM (UTC+0530)
Submission ID: 2715354534
File name: Sreerag_Ph_D_thesis_10.07.2025-1.pdf (9.55M)
Word count: 71667
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