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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.*

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Theyyam is a magico-religious belief system passed on to the present world through its vivid, multidimensional visual art structured based on the oral narrative from the regions of North Kerala. Most of Theyyam narratives are based on the remembrance of real-life incidents of the heroines and heroes who brought changes in the cultural, social background. Theyyam, in a way, is a remembrance of these cultural changes made by culturally deified heroes and heroines through its narrative and multidimensional art. The transmission of Theyyam through inheritance of its making and narrative legacies made it dynamic in the ongoing history. Later some narratives are intermingled with the Shaivites and Vaishnavites myth from the Hindu religious pantheons. It is considered 400 different types of Theyyam with their structural forms and narrative surrounding it.

The origin myth of 400 different types of Theyyam and their roles are the roots of the people's life and lore from north *kumbalasaroopam* to south *nediyirippuswaroopam*. *Swaroopam* means to be the kingdom in an area. Even though the account of present age data on Theyyam shows the availability of 400 forms of Theyyam, according to the oral tradition data from Thottam songs, it considers to be *onoorenaalpath* (*oonukuravenalpathu*). Which means one less to become forty, that is Thirty-nine main Theyyams. For the 400 forms of Theyyam, different arrangements of structural attire are designed by the Theyyam specialist in the gradual years of evolution according to the role type and the narrative it carries.

To create the metaphorical image of Theyyam that carries the character in the particular narrative, the Theyyam specialist given symbolic and iconic pattern that derived from nature that surrounded in north Kerala itself. Thus, this paper will enlighten the missing links in narratives and cultural elements that are mostly linked with nature, which prevailed in this region's unknown past.

There are various studies by scholars like Raghavan Payyanad, who did mainly on the socio-cultural aspect.¹

K. K. N. Kurupp, whose study is on historical part.² Dilip Menon, who did a study on the political.³ And there are some other studies based on the socio-economic context of Theyyam as well. However, the present paper studies Theyyam in a different direction as it studies the visual aspect that gives the structural attire consisting of symbolic and iconographic patterns and its relationship with narrative. Here the study tries to construct a visual aesthetic approach towards the multidimensionality of Theyyam. This present study thereby studies the Theyyam as pure multidimensional art, which provides spiritual insight into the communities and culture of north Kerala. Since the Theyyam is a traditional art form, it strictly follows its hereditary of passing down the whole social structure and substance from age to age to sustain its creative, symbolic, and metaphorical soul. Thus, it will decipher the hidden meaning forgotten in the past, that emancipates the cultural stagnation through relating the encoded meaning of the symbolism of attire and the narration.

To create the metaphorical image of Theyyam with the particular narrative, the Theyyam specialist gave symbolic and iconic patterns derived from nature. It seems that to create the essence of divinity, Theyyam specialists even follow the strict use of natural materials from nature to create the artifact of Theyyam. These iconic and symbolic patterns and elements make the attire of mukathezhuthu, mekezhuthu, mudi and aniyalam, etc. the combination and arrangement of these individual elements of attire and the symbolic pattern make the unique identity for each Theyyam according to role type. The literary meaning of attire and the symbolic designs show that each part of Theyyam is an amalgamation of its ecology of the region and cultural identities. For instance, the categories of mukathezhuthu such as Shangumvairadhalam, Maankannu, Prakkezhuthu, Pulikurichezhuthu, TheppuKuri, Anjupulli Aanakalu, Nagamthanezhuthu, Narikurichezhuthu, Kookarivalu, Kozhipushpadhalam, KattaramPulli, KodumPurikam, Muri Ezhuthu, MulluEzhuthu, Shangittezhuthu, Shangumvalum, KuriEzhuthu, Arayakodi, Panni Mookku, Kuttishangu, Parunthuval, and Thelvalu are the ecological and cultural identities from the region.

Table 1 : Theyyam Mukathezhuthu and Ecological Terms

Theyyam	Mukathezhuthu	Individual Malayalam meaning	English translation	Description
Puthiya Bhagavathy, Narambil Bhagavathy	Shangumvairadhalam	Shangum	Conch shell	These mukamezhuthu mainly observed for the Bhagavathy Theyyams. The main aim of this mukathezhuthu is to bring femininity to the deity's face. Shangum (conch shell) and Prakkum (pigeon) are significant icons that carry a 'sattvic bhava' with femininity.
		vairadhalam	Petal of native flower	
Thai Paradevatha	ShangumvalumPrakkum	Shangum valum	Conch shell with tail	
		Prakkum	Pigeon	
Padakathi Bhagavathy	Shangummullum	Shangum	Conch shell	
		mullum	prickle	
Karuvai Bhagavathy, Panjuruli, Uchitta	KuttishangumPrakkum	Kuttishangum	Conch shell variant	
		Prakkum	Pigeon	
Muchilottu Bhagavathy, Porkali Bhagavathy, Kannagattu Bhagavathy, Vallarkulangara Bhagavathy	Prakkezhuthu	Prakku	Pigeon	The iconography of two pigeons feeding their younger ones can be seen in these types of mukathezhuthu in the Bhagavathy Theyyam. It mainly depicts the maternity of the deity.
		ezhuthu	writing	
Vishnumoorthi Theyyam, Vairajathan	Kozhipushpam Kodumpurikam	Kozhipushpam	Red velvet flower (Celosia cristata)	This mukathezhuthu combines icons of different small native flowers like Thavarapushpam, Erinjipushpam, and Chithupathipoov, along with the Kodumpurikam (thick eyebrow). The writing is both sattvic and ferocious expressions. The icon of native flowers suggests the sattvic, and on the other hand, the Kodumpurikam imply the ferocious manifestation of the deity
		Kodumpurikam	thick eyebrow	
Poomaruthan	KodumpurikamEranjipookkuri	Kodumpurikam	thick eyebrow	
		Eranjipookkuri	Elengi flower (Mimusopselengi)	
Puliyoor Kannan, Puliyoor Kali, Kandampuli	Narikurichezhuthu	Nari	Tiger	The main iconography in this mukathezhuthu is the tiger's shape. It is symmetrically placed on the both side of cheeks of Theyyam along with the icons of native flowers. Here the mukathezhuthu is giving suggestion to the narrative of the deities, see fig (1).
		kurichezhuthu	Writing about	



Fig (1) mukathezhuthu of Puliyoor Kali, suggesting the two tigers on each side of the face of Theyyam.

From table-1 it can say that the individual terms for the various mukathezhuthu is derived from the combination of the native terms that are mainly derived from environment surrounding the Theyyam cultural sphere.

Mudi of Theyyam, on the other hand, are the structural forms suggesting the geometrical shapes, religious icons, structural features, and cultural identities. For instance, the Vatta mudi (round shape headgear) which is famous is used by almost half percentage of the furious mother goddess's forms. Then comes the Valiya mudi (large headgear) that as well used by mother goddesses to represent their power and sometimes a representation of fire. Kireedam (crown), Omkaramudi, Pothacha mudi, Kodu mudi, Thiriyola mudi, Koyyola, Pookatti mudi, Pau mudi, Purathattu Kireedam, Koombu mudi, Peeli mudi, Neelan mudi, Paala Mudi, Pachila mudi, Kothacha mudi etc are other mudi that got their name with formal nature and functionality of it.

When it comes to the literal meaning of costume, it carries mainly the functional aspect and nature of the material used for the costume, such as Thalapali (headpart), Kaiyyora (handcover), Marvattam (breast surround), Arayoda (waist embellishment), Kazhuthilkettu (throat knot), Choodakam (covering embellishment), Vellottupattam (whitecopper cover), Thenginkuruthola (tender coconut sheath), etc.

The relationship between narrative and the attire consists of mukathezhuthu, mekezhuthu and the mudi makes the Theyyam complete. for instance, the history of the heroic deities made the Theyyam specialist and artisans make it in the attire which resembles a solid heroic visual symbolism.

Some are victimized heroes who died for a common cause of society and a particular community. unjust in the societal structure made most of the heroes sacrifice their lives. The story of Palantayi Kannan or the Vishnumoorthi Theyyam is such divinity who lost his life in the injustice situation that prevailed in the period.

Palantayi Kannan or Vishnumurthi Theyyam

Kannan is a cowboy of the upper caste KuruvadanKurup family. He then banished for the offense of falling in love with his daughter and ordered to never return in pain of death. In exile, Kannan became a Komaram (priest) and wandered in the north Mangalapuram regions. But the homesickness of Kannan didn't allow him much to stay in exile and forced him return home. The return back of Kannan offended the KuruvatanKurup, and he killed the boy mercilessly while he was taking a bath in the pond with his sword. This unjust act by the upper-caste man over the poor cowboy made the grieving over the oppressive society, and later to deify the Kannan and worship him as a victimized hero.

The attire of Palantayi Kannan is unique from all the other male deities present in the Theyyam pantheon. The mukathezhuthu is written in Kozhipushpam with Kodumpurikam style, reflecting the deity's ferocious face who still carries vengeance in its soul. The mudi of the Palantayi Kannan is comparatively small but complex intricate form that shows the heroic nature of the deity. It is known as Thalamallikaykku mele Kereedam; literally, it means the crown itself. The Maarchamayam of Palantayi Kannan was designed uniquely, making the Theyyam different from all other male deities. It covers almost the whole part of the deity's body and is made with tender coconut tree leaves. Like the legend's narrative, the Palantayi Kannan's attire reminds us of his last moments in the pond he murdered, see fig (1). The Marchamayam named Koralaaram covers the deity up to the chest, visually making the worshipers visualize the drowning gesture after being stabbed in the pond. The guilt of the landlord's atrocity made him construct a shrine and give a place for his spirit. In the present day, the Theyyam's narrative intermingled with the Vaishnavitic concept of Narasimha and Prahlada and is known as Vishnumurthi. However, it is noticeable that the gesture and makeover of Palantayi Kannan are similar to the Narasimha who comes out of the pillar to kill Hiranyakashipu.



fig (1)vishnumoorthitheyyam

The chief deity of the *Thiyya* community, the Angakkaran Theyyam's legend, also talks about the hero's life, but a different type of hero who is a warrior who fights to protect the land. The plot represents the battle of *Payyur* hill by hero Angakkaran with the other clans or person called *Maruthala* or enemy. The name Angakkaran itself is a significant term meaning, the person who conducts Angam, which traditionally means the duel between the opposition. Even in the Northern Ballads, there are elaborate and numerous mentions of epic *Kalari* soldiers who fought for the landmass and properties in the demand of feudal landlords and Naduvazhi. The story of Theyyam *Payyampalli* Chandu gives a similar instance about the conquest for the fort of *Tamarasseri* in the direction of Naduvazhi of *Pattara*, the ruler of Kottayam.

Angakkaran Theyyam

The makeup of Angakkaran mainly resembles the makeup of Kativanoor Veeran. The mudi (headdress) is named Ichittongal Mudi, which resembles the shape of a scorpion. The mukathezhuthu is peculiar, coloured prominently with black and with the forehead Kuri of white and red. According to the custom of hero Theyyams, Angakkaran also wears and bears mainly black, representing the young nature of the hero. The upper arm, chest, and abdomen are painted white, black, and red. Most of the writing is on the body of Angakkaran rather than the face; the body is covered with white symbolic lines and red dots, the representation of the wound in the deadly fight narrated in the legend. In exception with this, his forehead is painted with complete black, which signifies the hero himself painted his face with black to disguise the fight between Angakkaran and Maruthala enemy named Kellu. The outfit of the Angakkaran consists mainly of two bands in hands, vattodas in the waist,

and with the visible representation of a hero, through the two Churikas (small swords) in his hands. Here as well the narration of the legend is visible in the visual aspect and material culture of the Theyyam makeover, which suggests undeniable influence between the oral narrative and the art of making of Theyyam.

Vettaykorumakan

Vettaykorumakan is another hero deity whose legend dates back to an era of feudal landowning communities that constantly fight each other. The Theyyam is performed by Vannan community, but almost all castes and community's worship Vettaykorumakan without any barrier. As the narrative of the Theyyam says, the deity originated from Siva and Parvathi; similar symbolic embellishment is visible in the Theyyam attire. The mudi (headdresses) is adorned chiefly with peeli (peacock feather); thus, it is known as peelimudi. Along with peacock feather, an elaborate chekki flower garland is also fixed. The Shaivites aspect of Theyyam is visible with the crescent embellishment made of metal. The crescent-shaped steel embellishment is the symbolism of water on the peelimudi, which is the symbolism of the river Ganga in the hair of the Shiva himself.

While coming to mukamezhuthu of Vettaykorumakan, its composition with two contrasting colours, red and green, makes the Theyyam unique in identity along with the black beard, suggesting the hero's masculinity. The design and writing on its body are the same colour from mukamezhuthu and supportive pattern of it. Vettaykorumakan uses metallic weapons, such as a bow and arrow in one hand and a sword and shield in the other.

Muchilotu Bhagavathy

The legend of Muchilottu Bhagavathy is a tragedy that still haunts the present world. The tragic story is about a Namboothiri girl who resided in *Perinchellore*, present-day Taliparamba district. The story begins with the public pronouncement made by the girl about sexual pleasure, even she is a virgin adolescent girl. People of her community member got offended and started questioning her chastity and excommunicated her. To prove her innocence publicly, she made to stand close to a stack of firewood at *Rayaramangalam* temple. In this imposition, the girl is shattered, steps into the fire, and does self-immolation. The story says that an oil monger came nearby, carrying the oil to the temple of Shiva in *Karivellur* named *Karivellurappan* where she previously went to request to relieve her sorrow and prove her innocence. The girl demands the oil monger to pour more oil to burn the fire with flames. This time, by her sudden instinct and the willpower, the oil monger is stunned and poured the oil into the fire stack. This gesture of oil monger gratified her, and she left her life, leaving ashes in oil urns. Finally, when the oil monger reached the temple with the

urn of ash, it overflowed with oil. Legend says that from those time onwards, the self-immolated soul of the girl is blessed by Karivellurappan and his consort *Rayaramangalam Bhagavathy* made her the divine form of Bhagavathy.

Later on, the girl appeared as *Bhagavathy* form with her anklet flickering inside the well of Kolathiri's warrior named Muchilotu while he was taking water. This mystical image made him worship her and install a Stanam for her; from that instance onwards, she is named *Muchilotu Bhagavathy*. Vaniyar caste worshiped her as the community's principal deity. The deity is also worshiped as the protector of several contagious diseases.

From this story, it is evident that the worship of the deity *MuchilotBhgavathy* happened because of the extreme grief of society after her self-immolation. The guilt of the people who were against the girl's freedom to live and express her thoughts led to people thinking that her curse caused the diseases. The story of Adiyogi of Kunnamangalam depicts this anxiety. It is said that after doubting the MuchilotuBhagavathy's divinity, she instigated smallpox and showed miracles. After this incident, he became a fervent worshiper of the deity.

The deity is a classic example of "*sattvikabhavam*" (peaceful expression) in the Bhagavathy cult of Theyyam. But the Bhagavathy's expression is giving dual meaning; the form carries both ferocity and pleasant attire hand in hand with good balance. The ferocity of Bhagavathy is created based on the internal turmoil of the girl's mind, which ends up in the selfless act of her immolation. Like all the Bhagavathy figures in the Theyyam pantheon, Muchilottu Bhagavathy is also exclusively adorned with red colour. There is no single portion in this goddess attire without red colour except some ornaments. While we read this prominent red colour with the narrative, it can say that the colour symbolizes the dual context of death and virtue of women.

Mukamezhuthu of *Muchilottu Bhagavathy* is called *Prakezhuthu*, in which the writing of the eye looks like a shape similar to *Pravu* (pigeon). While precisely observing *prakezhuthu*, the implicit depiction of two pigeons sitting opposite each other and feeding their younger ones is visible, see fig (2). The depiction of pigeon to *Muchilottu Bhagavathy* makes deity in sattvic appearance. But the portrayal of the family of the pigeon in the former times commiserate the girl's unfinished desire of familial or marital life. But later on, those who inspired this has aprecise pattern maybe lose the idea of what it conveys. This idea supports the story as well

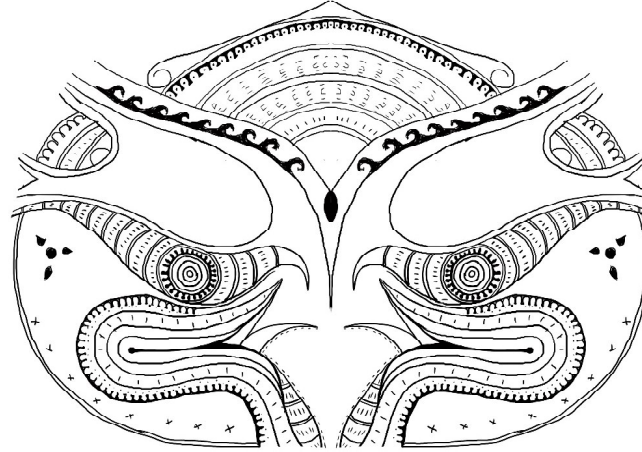


Fig (2) mukamezhuthu of Muchilottu Bhagavathy (prakezhuthu)

Apart from other Bhagavathy Theyyam, the *mular* (breastplate) of *Muchilottu* Bhagavathy is completely indistinguishable with many jewellery pieces over it. As the story mentioned, the deified girl is from the *Namboothiri* community, and the right to cover the breast is only reserved for upper-caste *Namboothiri* women. Thus, conceptualizing her deity image exposing the breast may be illicit.

The *mudi* of *Muchilottu* Bhagavathy comes under the category of *Vattamudi* and it is believed to be designed only for *Muchilottu* Bhagavathy by *Manakaadan Gurukkal*. But in *later* times, the *mudi* became common in some of the mother goddesses' forms. *Mudi* of this Theyyam traditionally made from the small splices of areca palm stem and bamboo, making the *mudi* flexible and less in weight. It is made in the shape of the Malayalam letter 'ra', similar to semicircle formation. As per the imagination of *ManakaadanGurukkal*, *MuchilottuBhagavathy's* origin concept is from mother earth. To attain this concept, the Theyyam specialist symbolically embellish *mudi* with *poomaala* (flower garland), *thakidu* (copper foils), *chekkipoovu*, *Mallika*, etc. The semicircle form of *mudi* contains the symbolic representations of the total cosmos and universe. It includes the stars, sky, earth, oceans, and white milky water bodies full of water lilies. The peculiarity of *Muchilottu Bhagavathy* is its set of two *Dhamshttra* (pseudo teeth) and the covering on eyes by silver plate. In the performance, the props like swords and shields are used, and less often, she will bear a pair of fire torches in her hands.

Makkam Bhagavathy

The legend of *KandangotuMakkam* deals with the tragic murder of *Makkam* in the blame game of resentment between *Makkam* and the wives of

her siblings. Born to a Nambiar caste family Kandangotu which reside in Payyanur as a loved single sister of twelve brothers. The blind love and affection by the brother over Makkam earned their wife's jealousy and hostility towards Makkam. They were waiting to blame her for some reason and besmirch their husband's faith towards her. Thus, one day, her brothers were out for a battle; as they were the Kolathiri's Warriors, the sister-in-law got the chance to besmirch Makkam. VaniyanEmman, an oil seller, came to their house to deliver the oil. Since Makkam was menstruating and not allowed to come out, her sister-in-law was not around. She told the oil seller to keep the oil jar in one corner of the room. But her sisters-in-law deliberately didn't come around to make the VaniyanEmman enter the room and to blame her disloyalty. So, when their husbands come back after the battle, they make up fake stories about their sister's infidelity with the oil seller VaniyanEmman.

Anguished brothers decided to kill their sister, who ruined the family name and brought disgrace. But her brothers don't want to kill their sister in their home. So, they took her and her kids to another place and killed them in the forest. A Mavilan who happened to come and witness the murder get killed. Gratified brothers go back to their family house, thinking they had kept the vow on family's status. But this heinous murder haunted some brothers. They started arguing about the unjust they committed. This argument made them fight each other and kill each other. In between this fight, the fire broke out in the house, and it claimed their wife's life as well.

The *mudi* of Makkam is known as *vatta mudi*, which covers red. But the edges of it are dominantly embellished with tender coconut leaves. The usage of tender coconut leaves on the top edges of *mudi* is purely artistic. Because while seeing *mudi* in lamplight in the darkness of night, it glows in an appearance similar to hallow. The top part of *mudi* is adorned with sixteen flaming fire torches, giving the hallow an extra glow. the fire in overall the Theyyam attire symbolizes the vengeance, which is quenched by the fire that claimed the sister-in-law's life at the end of the story. Although most of MakkamBhagavathy's form is covered with tender coconut leaves, and gives her a light tone of green overall. But it can't dominate the red colors adorn *mudi*, *mukamezhuth*, and over the breastplate. The red portion of *mudi* is embellished elaborately with flower garlands, mainly with *chekki* flowers.

The Bhagavathy's Theyyam performs along with her kids Cheeru and Chathu only in the houseless land and paddy fields, because people consider that the Theyyam ruins household where it served. The Vannan caste performs the Theyyam in Kuthuparambu, Mavilayi, Kunhimangalam, Pilathara, and Chembilode. Chembilode is the place of the deity's permanent Sthanam (shrine).

Legends of animal deity and symbolism on attire

Mukathezhuthu of the Theyyam is a ritually major part of the Theyyam makeover. Theyyam specialist and artist writes the Theyyam face according to the rules they acquire from their ancestors down to the present time. Each set of designs and pattern gives the nature and character of the god or goddess. Thus, every design and decorative element means giving extraordinary power to each performer's sense to become the god or goddess.

Mudhala Theyyam

Mudhala Theyyam is performed only in some of the rare Kaavu in the north of Kerala in Kannur district. While performing, mudi of mudhala Theyyam reminds of a land or object that doesn't sink in the water. The land that protected the living being from flood or passing current. And the legend of mudhala Theyyam also has a similar story to tell. It says that when the time of great flood occurs near Thiruprangathamma temple, the priest who stuck and unable to reach the temple to do mundane lighting of the lamp, Thiruprangathamma, disguised as crocodile, came to help priest by carrying across the flooded river over its body. The onlooker villager astounds by this mystic phenomenon and commemorates this. They give the goddesses the Theyyam form to receive blessings in every performance. Theyyam blesses worshippers by protruding the neck, crawling, and circumnavigating the temple surrounding them.

Mudi (headgear) of Mudhala Theyyam is uniquely styled, known as *chennimalar*. This mudi is adorned with the areca nut sheath cuts in an oval shape fashion and detailed with the drawing of reptiles such as snake, tortoise, crocodile, lizard, scorpion, and centipede as well on the top of it. These symbolic drawings adorned thalappali, thalathanda, olakathu, chetti poo, and tholvala also placed. The face writing of the Theyyam is known as *vattakannu* (round eye), which shows the furious appearance of the deity. On the body of Theyyam, coconut palm leaves are tied from front to back for some practical usage, that is it easy the movement of Theyyam while crawling.

PulliKarimkali, Pulikandan,

According to Theyyam legend, Puli Karin Kali and Pulikandan are the ferocious tiger avatar or form of Parvathi and Param Siva. While they were roaming around the Thuloor *Vanam* (forest), their desire was awakened by seeing the copulation of two tigers. They take the avatar of tiger and tigress known as Puli Karimkali and Pulikandan and give birth to their five tiger cubs Puliyoor Kannan, Puli Maaruthan, Kandam Puli, Mara Puli, Kala Puli. When all of her kids became male tigers, Karin kali became sad and praised Lakshmi Devi for a girl child. Hearing this, Lakshmi Devi became the foetus inside Karin Kali's womb. That girl child in the avatar of the tigress is named Puliyoor

Kali. As per the legend, the Theyyam of these eight deities, including the tiger avatars of Shiva and Parvathy and their children, is metaphorically venerated and designed to look symbolic images of the tiger with superficial quality. The forms of this Theyyam are highly ferocious with surrealistic in natures with intricate symbols and icons that denote the tiger character according to the narrative of it.

Puliyoor Kannan

The mukathezhuthu (facial writing) of this Theyyam is known as the Narikurichezhuthu. Thus, Nari in Malayalam is a tiger, and this type of mukathezhuthu is the prominent symbolism for tiger deities. Like the narration, the mukathezhuthu gives the ferocious tigers' attire metaphorically. Apart from the mukathezhuthu, the marchamayam (body attire) of the Puliyoor Kannan also reveals the tiger's animality: The marchamayam adorned with fluffy cotton, and a tail reminds us of the fluffy hairs and tails of the real tiger from the legend.

Kadam Puli

The makeover and embellishment of Kadam are similar to Kadam Puli, the mukathezhuthu of this Theyyam known as Narikurichezhuthu. Then the marchamayam (body attire) is also adorned with fluffy cotton. Still, in some variations of Kadam Puli's performance, the body is decorated with symbolic dots and line writing which reminds of the tiger.

Conclusion

From above all inferences, it can be said that the relationship between the multidimensional visual aspect of Theyyam and the narration (Thottam, anecdotes, stories, and other literature) surrounded by it is undeniable. It can also say that this relation between the art of making of Theyyam or the deities makes it complete and invokes spiritual and metaphysical insight in the performer's minds. And thereby through the performance, which commiserates an act of cladding in ritualistic behavior that transit the idea into the worshiper. Here, this symbolically coded cultural act of communication is between the deities and worshippers or performers and the audience. The study of relating the oral history of Theyyam to the structural features consisting of the iconography and symbolism helps to decode some encoded symbolic meaning that got faded in the history of the Theyyam performance. The remembrance of Palantayi Kannan's image of a victimized hero who suffered to death and was later revered as an avatar of Vishnu in the Vaishnavaitic concept is a clear example of conscious transformation happening to the Theyyam narrative. The iconography and symbolism of Theyyam have many layers of meaning that create its divinity. So, decoding the encoded meaning in the iconography of Theyyam is not making a concrete idea about it, but that helped to see more

profound meaning into the dynamic of Theyyam that gives transcendental insight to the culture and communities of this region.

Notes

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